

Let's Rewrite The Stars

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Let's Rewrite The Stars

by [Ashleyparker2815](#)

Summary

New York was the last place Pepper and Peter expected to end up but it seemed to be the perfect place to start over. After she meets Tony, she thinks she can finally get a new start with her son but her past comes back to haunt her.

Pepper tries to hide the fact that she's lying about her past and doesn't want Tony to know the truth about her and Peter being homeless. While Tony has his own share of secrets that he can't tell Pepper about just yet.

With secrets between the two, how will they ever get the new beginning they both deserve.

Notes

Hi everyone!

So I had this idea for this fic for almost 6 months now and I hadn't gotten around to writing it. Then about two weeks ago I started writing it just as I started my new job so I've been working full time and writing this fic and I've written everything but the last chapter

I usually write Peter and Tony centric so it's something new for me

I hope you guys like it!!

Time to go and start over

“Hide under the bed. Don’t come out no matter what you hear.” Pepper whispered, ushering Peter under his bed but Peter whimpered and pulled away.

“No. What about you? We-we can run away.” Peter looked towards his bedroom window but Pepper was holding his face in her hands, turning his attention away from their only way of escaping.

“It’s okay. I’ll be okay.” The sound of the front door being kicked open echoed into the bedroom causing both of them to flinch. “Go under your bed and don’t make a sound.”

Peter backed away but he grabbed his mother’s hand. “Stay with me. Don’t leave. I’m scared.” He whimpered but Pepper had to leave the bedroom to protect her son.

She had already made up her mind but it wasn’t hard to make up, she would do anything for Peter. “I love you. Stay here and don’t come out no matter what you here.”

Peter reluctantly crawled under his bed and shook with fear. He knew his dad was trying to hurt them. He had been banging repeatedly on the front door, trying to get it open and now he was in the house.

Once Pepper knew her son was okay, she left his bedroom, shutting the door behind her.

“Get out!” Pepper yelled at her husband as he tried to grab her again. “Get out, Ben!”

Ben grabbed Pepper’s arm and pulled her closer to himself. “I’m not going anywhere and neither are you! You’re not taking my son, Pepper.”

Pepper ripped herself away from Ben and fell hard onto the floor. “You’re not a father to him. You never were!”

He narrowed his eyes at her, slowly stepping towards her. “You’re not taking him. I don’t care.”

“You can’t keep doing this. Peter doesn’t deserve this!” Pepper yelled. She slowly inched backwards until her back was pressed up against the wall. Her wrist was swollen and the side of her face was hurting a lot but she was more focused on keeping her son safe right now.

Ben grabbed Pepper’s legs and pulled her towards himself. He straddled her hips and wrapped his hands around her throat, cutting the oxygen off. “You’re not taking my son.”

Peter couldn’t hide under his bed while his mom was out there alone and scared with his dad. He could hear them yelling at each other so he whimpered but covered his hand over his mouth to stay silent. He was so scared but he heard the yelling stop and was afraid his dad had hurt his mom so he slowly crawled out from under his bed and opened his bedroom door.

He spotted a broken vase on the floor and stepped over it then saw his dad on top of his mom with his hands around her neck. Peter screamed and rushed towards them.

“No! Stop! Stop it! You’re gonna kill her! Stop!” Peter tried to push his dad off and kick him but it wasn’t working so he grabbed his arm and bit him as hard as he could. He was missing his two front teeth so he hoped it hurt his dad enough.

Ben let go of Pepper to push Peter away. “Ow! What the fuck! Get off.”

Peter backed away, looking up at his dad with terrified eyes as the man fully stood up and walked towards him.

“Run! Run, Peter!” Pepper yelled, she was gasping for air but Peter needed her so she grabbed the lamp off the table and hit Ben over the head, knocking him to the ground.

Pepper stepped over his body as he rolled on the ground, slowly bringing himself back to consciousness. She grabbed the car keys off the table and ran towards Peter, not even thinking as she picked him up and ran out the door and across the grass, towards their car.

She ran around to the drivers side and swung the door open, throwing Peter across to the passenger seat and jumping in.

Her hands were shaking so much as she tried to put the key into the ignition. Ben ran out of the house and towards the car. He was holding the side of his head that had blood pouring down his face from where she hit him.

“Mommy! I’m scared!” Peter screamed, curling in on himself as his dad tried to open the locked car door and banged on the window.

Pepper got the car started and drove away, not looking back.

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Three months later

Peter grabbed onto the monkey bar, wrapping his legs around it so he could hang upside down.

Pepper was watching from the park bench, dark sunglasses on and a hat.

They were free and she was finally happy but that still didn’t stop her from feeling incredibly anxious almost all of the time. Especially when they were out in public.

She didn’t take her eyes off her eight year old, wanting to make sure he stayed safe at all times. “Careful, Peter. Don’t fall.”

Peter giggled. “I won’t fall. I’m a spider!” He lifted himself up so he was sitting on top of the bars. Most of the kids at the playground, even the older kids couldn’t climb to the top of the monkey bars but he could. He wasn’t allowed to go to the park a lot when they were living with his dad but now that they lived on their own, they got to go to the park whenever they wanted, so he got a lot of practice.

“I can see that, baby. Still be careful.” Pepper sat back and continued to watch Peter for the next few minutes and then he was running over to her and climbing on her lap.

"I'm thirsty, mommy." Peter told her, wiping the sweat off his forehead. It was cold out but it was a rather warmer day, especially with him running around at the park for the past hour.

Pepper grabbed her purse and stood up, lifting Peter onto his feet. "Okay, let's go find something to drink. Would you like an ice cream?"

Peter took a hold of his mom's hand and squealed in excitement. Pepper wanted to have special days with Peter every once and while to make the sudden and rather terrifying move across the country a little bit easier.

She worked a lot of shifts at the office so she wasn't home as much as she would like but that meant she had to find daycare for Peter when she was working and that wasn't easy.

It was hard enough finding someone who's trustworthy but finding someone who's reliable too is almost impossible.

They walked hand in hand down the street, trying to find somewhere to find ice cream or a coffee shop. Peter swung Pepper's hand in his, jumping over a crack every so often.

She loved hearing Peter so happy. It's been hard these last few months but everything was starting to feel somewhat normal as of recently. She just hoped it stayed that way.

Peter stopped walking and pointed to a shop across the street. "Mommy, look! Ice cream!"

Pepper looked in that direction where Peter was pointing and smiled, praising Peter. "Good eyes, baby. Let's look both ways before we cross the road."

They ran hand in hand across the street, Pepper making sure there were no cars at first. It wasn't something she liked doing at first, the whole jaywalking thing but shortly after they moved into Queens, it became rather clear that that was how they were going to get around the fastest.

"I'm gonna get chocolate ice cream." Peter said as they walked through the doors. He couldn't help but squeal in his excitement when they walked in. A few heads turned to look at them and it made Pepper feel incredibly vulnerable and the urge to run out of there was so strong but she knew

that wasn't her life anymore. That wasn't their life anymore. She didn't have to be scared over everything.

They stood in line, Peter letting go of Pepper's hand to press his face against the glass to look at all the ice cream options. "Woah! They have Cotten candy unicorn blast here."

Pepper laughed at the ridiculous name. "Did they need to extend the ice cream bin just to fit that name." She said, mainly to herself since Peter wouldn't understand.

Someone behind her chuckled but she paid them no mind, more focusing on Peter. When it was their turn to order, Peter grabbed onto the counter and peeked his head over the top, only his eyes and the top of his head visible.

"Can I please have Uh... Cotten candy unicorn blast? Please and thank you?" Peter remembered his manners and felt proud of himself.

Pepper playfully nudged him. "And here I was thinking you were going to get chocolate."

Peter shrugged. "I like trying new things now."

She ruffled his hair then ordered for herself. "Can I get a coffee? Two cream, one sugar. Thanks."

Peter turned and held his hand out to hand over the money. "Can I pay, mommy?"

"That'll be \$11.35." The cashier said. Pepper was struggling to grab the money out of her wallet while Peter was tugging on her arm and pulling on her shirt.

"Mommy? Can I pay?" Peter tugged on Pepper's shirt to get her attention. "Mommy? I wanna pay." He pulled the front of her shirt down and in Pepper's rush to pull it back up so she didn't expose herself, she dropped her wallet on the ground, pouring her change everywhere. "Oopsie, mommy."

Pepper bent down to start cleaning up the money, apologizing to the person waiting behind her in the lineup.

“Here, I got it.” The man behind her handed the money to the cashier. “Keep the change.” He said then bent down to help Pepper clean up her dropped money. “It’s like that game show to see who can pick up the money the fastest.”

Pepper was so embarrassed. She faked a forced laugh and looked at the man, brushing her hair out of her face. “Oh, thank you.”

He gave her a kind smile. “It’s not a problem. Really, I can see you got your hands full.”

She felt like a complete idiot. Here she was, on her hands and knees picking up her change on the coffee shop floor, making a fool out of herself in front of a rather handsome man. Wow, she hadn’t thought of anyone as handsome in a long, long time.

She blushed as he stood up and held his hand out for her to help her up. “Thank you so much. Seriously. Thanks.”

The man waved her off. “No problem. Enjoy that unicorn ice cream, kid.”

Peter grabbed the ice cream off the counter and smiled at the man, showing off his toothy grin.

“Well, thanks again.” Pepper gave her own smile to the man and guided Peter out of the shop. “That was nice of him, don’t you think?”

Peter nodded, already covered in ice cream all over his face and the front of his shirt. “Uh huh. Maybe he’s Santa.”

“He didn’t look like Santa.” Pepper playfully rolled her eyes and guided Peter to a bench they could sit on. “Santa is fat and old.”

Peter giggled. “Santa brings me gifts at Christmas time.”

“Yeah, baby. He sure does.” Pepper was glad Christmas was so far away because she didn’t think

she could afford any Christmas gifts right now. Or even a tree. All they had in their small apartment was a few basics and even that was hard to get her hands on. Her and Peter shared a bed for now, until she could afford to get Peter his own bed. They had a couch, a tv and Peter had a few toys, that was about it.

Rent was *expensive*. She was used to someone paying her bills for her so to have to be in control of that and balance a checkbook, it was a rather huge adjustment.

Peter stuck out his tongue to try and see it. “Do I look like a unicorn yet?”

“Almost. Maybe if you finish it all, you’ll be able to fly us home.” As soon as Pepper said that, Peter’s smile fell.

He crossed his arms over his chest and put his ice cream on the bench. “I don’t wanna go back home. I like it here now, mommy.”

Pepper placed her hand on Peter’s knee. “Oh, Peter. I didn’t mean that. I just meant home to our new apartment. Not back there.” She pulled Peter in for a hug, holding him close. “Are you happy here?”

Peter thought about it. He didn’t have to listen to his mommy cry every night or hear his dad hurt her so he liked that. “Yeah. I like it here.”

Pepper smiled. That felt good to hear. “I like it here too.”

Peter picked up his ice cream and spotted the man from inside the coffee shop. He pointed at him. “Look, mommy. It’s Santa!”

Pepper immediately turned red again. All she knew was that she embarrassed herself enough in front of that man so she better not see him ever again after today.

The man walked over to them, holding a coffee in one hand. “Santa, huh? And I thought I looked good today.”

Pepper grabbed Peter's head to hold it against her chest, stopping him from talking and embarrassing her further. "You do look good. I mean, he just called you Santa because you got us this." She gestured to the coffee and ice cream.

The man chuckled. "Well, thanks." He ran his hands through his hair and shrugged, looking at Peter. "Santa's pretty good looking too, so I see where you got confused."

Peter giggled and shook his head. "No. He's funny looking."

"Well, then I'm glad I don't look like him."

Peter bursted out laughing so Pepper patted his back so he didn't choke. She thought the oddly handsome man would leave after that but he stayed and looked a bit uncomfortable.

"So Uh, yeah, I gotta go but you guys enjoy that. Bye."

Peter giggled and waved. "Bye, Santa!"

"Bye." Pepper waved bye as well, staring at him for a bit longer than was probably necessary. Maybe it was because the man showed an interest in not only her but Peter too. In a good way. After what she dealt with in her life, she was a pretty good judge of character. Not that she could base anything off on meeting the guy twice.

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Pepper made sure all the windows and doors were locked in their apartment before grabbing her tea and Peter's warm milk then heading into her bedroom which was also Peter's room.

New York was expensive and she had a total of \$1250 to start a new life with. Almost half that money was spent on getting the hell out of where they came from so the best she could do with such a short time was this apartment but aside from the small size of it, it was perfect.

It was close to the elementary school, shops, it even had security cameras in the main lobby and hallways which surprisingly enough wasn't as common as she thought in apartments. At least not with her price budget.

She handed Peter his milk and got into bed. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." Pepper took a sip and looked at what Peter was writing on the white board. "Very good, Peter. You're getting so good at that."

Peter half smiled at the praise. "Thanks. It feels weird though. I don't like it."

Pepper ran her fingers through Peter's curls at the back of his neck. "I know, but we have to. Let's go over it again. Ready?"

"Uh huh." Peter turned to face his mom fully and Pepper placed her tea on the nightstand table. "My name is Peter Moore. I'm eight years old. I live with my mommy, Pepper Moore and my daddy died when I was a baby so I don't remember him. Um..." Peter forgot the rest so he looked at his mom.

"Why we moved." Pepper helped him out, already so proud of Peter for remembering their lie.

"Oh yeah! Uh, we moved here three months ago cause our house in..."

"Ohio."

"... Ohio caught on fire and I lost all my toys. I was so sad." Peter smiled, he hoped that was good enough.

Pepper clapped her hands. "Good job, Peter. High five."

Peter gave her a high five but frowned. He didn't fully understand why he had to lie so much. "Why can't I just say we're from Minnesota? That's where we're actually from."

“We have to say Ohio so no one finds us.” Pepper explained once again but she was incredibly patient.

Peter nodded.

“Again.”

With a sigh, Peter began reciting the lie. “My name is Peter Moore...”

Who am I supposed to be?

Chapter Notes

It's a snowstorm where I live so I didn't have to go to work today but I woke up early and got everything ready for no reason lol but at least I had more time to write!

Also thank you to everyone who read my fic and commented and gave me kudos! I appreciate all of you so much so thank you!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Pepper raced down the street to make it time to pick Peter up from the after school program he was in.

She could imagine she looked like a crazy person as she ran down the snowy sidewalk, her hair blowing in the wind and her stuff flying everywhere.

Peter hated going to the program since he was used to his mom dropping him off and picking him up everyday but now here he was, having to go to school early some days and staying late every day. He hated it but he tried not to show it too much, knowing Pepper was trying her best.

Pepper stepped into a pile of freshly fallen snow and slipped on a patch of ice under it that she couldn't have seen. She lost her balance and with a startling scream, she fell on her butt, effectively getting her skirt soaked in the process.

Now she was late *and cold*.

"Great." She muttered to herself as she tried to stand up but ended up slipping again. If she had time to really think about it, she would have been more embarrassed about falling on her butt in the middle of the streets in New York.

The sound of a car door opening followed by a man laughing caused Peppers attention to look towards the laughing.

A man, dressed in a suit that looked like it cost more than her life savings, walked out of an even more expensive looking black car. She gave him a dirty look. *How rude of him*, she thought.

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry!” The man shook his hands as he hopped over the snow bank, making his way over to Pepper. “I’m sorry I’m laughing so hard...” He tried to catch his breath but he couldn’t stop laughing and it was almost contagious so Pepper smiled and looked down. “It’s just... I saw you running like your life depended on it... then you just went down.”

Pepper shook her head, laughing now herself. She was still sitting on her butt in the snow and was *freezing* now.

“It’s not even that funny, I don’t know why I’m laughing so hard.” He was finally starting to calm down now so he held his hands out for her. “Here. Let me help you up.”

She grabbed onto his strong, callused hands and got to her feet, catching her balance. “Thank you. I um, that’s embarrassing. I-”

“No. Don’t be embarrassed. It’s not even that funny it’s just,” The man bent down to pick up all the stuff that Pepper dropped and handed it back to her. “Okay. It was really funny. Here you go.”

Pepper wiped her skirt off the best she could. She was cold, wet, uncomfortable *and late* now. “Thank you. I really appreciate you um, getting out of your car to help me.” There were people on the street that were walking around them, not even giving her the time of day.

Now that Pepper was looking into the man’s eyes, she could make out his handsome features. He was extremely good looking. And he had such kind, brown eyes that made her think of Peter. She smiled.

They seemed to get lost in each other’s eyes for a moment so when the man held his hand out for her to shake, Pepper was brought back to reality. “Oh. Hi. I’m Pepper.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Pepper. My name is Tony. Tony Stark.”

She nodded. “Well, Tony, thank you for helping me up but I gotta run.” She looked down and laughed. *Literally*. She literally had to run because the school's program was closing in five minutes and she was at least another ten minutes away.

The man, Tony, gestured to his car. "I can drive you. I mean, I've got a car. I don't want you to be late for whatever it is you're running to."

Pepper took a step back from him. He seemed nice but she literally just met the guy. She had just come out of an abusive relationship and she was having a hard time trusting *any* adult for that matter. She grabbed her purse tightly. "Thank you. But no thanks. I'm actually just going around the block so it'll be quicker to walk."

Tony nodded, stepping away from her. "Are you sure?"

"Yep. It was nice to meet you, Tony. Thank you again." With that, Pepper began walking towards the school and Tony got back into his car and drove in the opposite direction of her.

Once she turned the corner, she began running again. She just made sure not to slip on any ice. She already knew she was going to be late and that meant she had to pay extra money to the staff which also meant that this would be the fourth time in a month. One more time and they were going to have to kick Peter out of the program.

When she arrived at the school, Peter was standing outside with the after school teacher. They were both dressed in their winter coats and ready to go. Pepper felt *awful*. "Hi. I'm here. I'm here. I'm so sorry I'm so late. My boss wouldn't let me leave until I finished filing the work for today."

Peter ran up to her. "Mommy! I missed you. It's dark out."

Pepper briefly hugged him. "I missed you too. Um, here let me get you the extra money. How much do I owe you for being late?"

The teacher looked pissed off. She was young, maybe twenty one or twenty two. Pepper couldn't help but think that she was annoyed because she wanted to go home and get ready for a party.

"Eight dollars. Two dollars for every minute you were late."

Pepper was struggling to find her wallet and now she was starting to panic that it fell in the snow when she fell. Maybe Tony took it? Oh god, did Tony take it? All of her information was in there. No, he looked incredibly rich. What would he want with a poor woman's wallet. Oh god, what if he was a friend of Bens... no. Pepper was simply overreacting.

Peter was holding onto her arm, making it harder for Pepper to dig for her wallet in her purse. "Sorry. Just... give me a second to find it in here."

Her hair was falling in her face and now her skirt was freezing and clinging onto her skin uncomfortably. She sighed in relief once she found her wallet. "Oh! Here it is. How much? Eight dollars?"

That's a lot. That's almost half an hour of working for four minutes late...

Pepper tried to count the change in her hand but her fingers were frozen. "Um... I don't seem to have enough right now um... can I give you three dollars now and five tomorrow morning?"

Peter tugged on her arm. "No mommy. I don't wanna come back tomorrow morning!"

The teacher took the three dollars in change. "That's fine. Also, this is Peter's fourth time staying late in a month. One more time and I'm afraid we'll have to drop him from the program."

Pepper nodded. "Okay. It's just because the weather today and my boss--"

"I understand. Unfortunately I don't make those decisions. I have to go, have a good night."

Pepper turned to watch her walk away and get into her car. She looked down at Peter and smiled. "How was your day today?"

Peter looked up at her. "Can you be late again tomorrow so I don't have to come here again?"

Pepper grabbed onto his hand and started walking. "I have to work, Peter. If you don't go here, then I can't work and then I can't put food on the table or keep a roof over our heads."

Peter looked down at his new winter boots. He remembered his mom telling him he had to take extra care of them because they didn't have the extra money to buy new boots. He liked them better than his old ones at least.

“Why can’t you ask daddy for money? He paid for everything before. Right?”

Pepper hadn’t spoken to Peter about his dad in a while now. She hated talking about him but she never shut Peter down whenever he did. He didn’t know everything that was done to Pepper so it wasn’t his fault he didn’t hate him as much as Pepper did.

“Your father paid for a lot of stuff because he was the one who worked while I stayed home and looked after you and the house.” Pepper did miss it. She actually really enjoyed being a housewife and having all the time to look after her son so it was definitely a really hard adjustment with having to go to work and get an income to just barely make it.

She needed to get a second job but it was hard because then she needed to find a babysitter for Peter and she wasn’t sure she could afford that; also the fact she didn’t trust anyone with her son.

Peter skipped next to her. “I just miss it when you used to pick me up after school. I don’t like staying there after.”

Pepper felt bad but right now, there was nothing she could do about it. She needed childcare and the school was the safest and cheapest option.

“How about I make it up to you this weekend and we go to the park?”

Peter squealed excitedly. “Yes! I’m so excited! It’s snowing out but I can still practice climbing on the monkey bars.” He was so happy now and he couldn’t wait until the weekend came.

The walk from the school to their apartment was about fifteen minutes and another fifteen minutes from Pepper’s work to Peter’s school. She was only walking thirty minutes there and back a day so it could be a lot worse, she supposed.

The job wasn’t the best but it was pretty decent considering everything. And it was a job with a steady income to allow them to *just* scrape by.

Once they got into their apartment, they walked into the elevator and Pepper allowed Peter to press their floor. She hoped she didn’t bump into anyone on the way up, she was way too exhausted to

fake a conversation with someone when she still had to cook dinner, give Peter a bath and put him to sleep all before she could actually sit down and rest herself.

“Mommy, I wanna unlock the door. Can I do it? Give me the keys. Please.”

Pepper handed the keys to her eight year old son and waited patiently for him to figure out how to turn it to get it unlocked. “Good job. Shoes off and go wash your hands then homework on the table. You get started on that while I cook dinner.”

Peter ran to do as he was told, used to the routine by now.

Pepper washed her hands and filled up a pot to start boiling while she went into the bedroom to change into comfortable clothes as Peter barged in. “Mommy? I think I left my homework at school actually.”

Pepper sighed. “Well, I can’t do anything about that now, honey. Even if we had a car to drive there, the school is closed.” She took off her bra and put a tank top on, grateful to finally be home. “I’ll have to write a note for your teacher then.”

She walked out of the bedroom to add the boxed Mac and cheese into the water. She had to admit that she was sick of Mac and cheese herself but it was the cheapest and quickest meal to prepare.

She used to have all day to plan, prepare and cook a healthy, delicious meal and now she was getting off work at 5:30pm and racing to pick Peter up for six, coming home and they had two hours to eat, finish homework, take a bath and get ready for bed so Peter could be asleep by eight.

Of course he never was and so he woke up tired and miserable every morning, having to wake up extra early so Pepper could go to work. It was a lot she was asking of him but she didn’t know what else to do. They needed the money.

Pepper was already behind on rent because Peter was sent home from school with the flu so she had to leave work and stay home with him for two days. Two days with no money. It made a huge difference.

After they moved here, Pepper sold the car and made \$12,000 off of that but the money quickly left her bank account. They needed a place to live and it took a few weeks to find work so between

rent, groceries, and buying mandatory furniture for the place, they were broke.

She was doing everything in her power to make ends meet but it was harder than she thought it was going to be. She couldn't even afford \$8 to pay the after school program teacher so after Peter went to bed she was going to search her apartment and hopefully find some change lying around.

Peter was yawning all throughout dinner so when it was bath time, Pepper took all the toys out of the bath, wanting to make this a quick wash and not play time.

While Peter was taking his clothes off in the bedroom, she ran the bath but it was all cold water. "Shit." She whispered under her breath. "C'mon. C'mon."

There was no hot water so she groaned and stood up just as Peter walked in. "I'm ready."

"Don't get in yet, Peter. I have to add some hot water into it for you."

Peter leaned over the tub and dipped his toes in. "Ah! It's so cold. Where's the warm water?"

"I told you not to go in yet. Get out, Pete."

Peter quickly pulled his feet out. "I'm not. I just dipped my toes in. I'm cold."

Pepper was cold too. She was exhausted and mentally drained but she had to take care of Peter first. So she filled up the kettle with water and waited for it to boil. She thought about the life they were living now and if it was really worth it. They were well off with Ben. They had a stocked fridge, endless amounts of warm water, a warm bed to sleep in, access to a car and extra money. Maybe Pepper should have put up with the abuse. Maybe she should have for Peter...

But Ben touched Peter. She always told herself that she would put up with it until the day Ben laid his hands on Peter and the minute she saw Ben grab Peter's arm and throw him down the hallway, she knew she had to take Peter and leave.

And they did... but now, she was drowning just trying to keep her head above the water.

When she walked into the bathroom to dump the boiling water into the cold water to hopefully heat it up, she saw Peter digging in her makeup bag and ruining her lipstick. "Peter! Stop it. Put that down. My makeup isn't paint."

Peter dropped it, frightened at the sudden voice. "I'm sorry!"

Pepper sighed. "No. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have scared you like that." She dumped the hot water into the tub and placed the empty kettle on the floor. "Come here."

Peter hesitated at first but made his way over to his mom and buried himself against her chest. "M'sorry."

"I shouldn't have raised my voice. I wasn't thinking. And I'm sorry for that." She ran her hand through his long curls. "Let's get you washed up and then we'll go to bed."

Peter nodded but waited for his mom to pull away first. Pepper checked the bath temperature then let Peter climb in and helped him wash up, wanting to be quick to get him in bed.

Their life was a rush.

They were always in a rush to do something or to get somewhere and it was taking a toll on the two of them. Whether they were rushing to wake up and get ready to get to school on time, or Pepper racing to pick Peter up from school but not making it anyways, then rushing to eat, bathe and get into bed, it was a lot.

They needed a break.

Once Peter was in pyjamas and in bed, Pepper laid next to him, still dressed in her clothes. She had to get ready for tomorrow so she couldn't go to bed yet.

Peter stuck his thumb in his mouth and turned to face his mom. "Mm."

“What, Pete?” She asked softly as she continued to run her fingers through his baby curls.

Peter rolled onto his stomach, thumb still lodged in his mouth. “Nothin’. Just... I’m happy I don’t have to listen to daddy yelling at you every night no more.”

Pepper felt tears burn her eyes. She was glad Peter was lying on his stomach and couldn’t see her face. She breathed. “I’m sorry you had to listen to that, baby.”

Peter shrugged.

Pepper felt awful. She always tried to be quiet and not engage with Ben but he always had other plans and didn’t seem to ever care that their young son was sleeping just down the hall from where they were yelling. She always assumed Peter was asleep and never heard it because he never came out of his room and never brought it up the next day. Now, Pepper knew he heard it all.

“I didn’t mean for you to hear any of that. Your father was,” She sighed. *Is*. He is. He’s still alive and no doubt looking for them. “a very angry man. I don’t know why. I’m just grateful it’s just us now.”

Pepper was always terrified that Ben was going to find them, she was scared she would always live with that fear.

Peter nodded. “Me too. Hold me tighter.”

Pepper wrapped her arms around her son, and stayed that way until he drifted off to sleep. He woke up from nightmares every now and then but as time went on, those nightmares seemed to stop.

Progress.

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Tony was working in his office going over some paperwork before he ended the night and went to bed but his phone rang so he picked it up.

It wasn't the strangest thing that he was getting a phone call on his work phone at this time of night so he wasn't surprised. "This is Stark."

"Hey. I rescheduled an appointment with you a few weeks ago and I'd like to reschedule it for tomorrow." The rough voice came back on the other end.

Tony shook his head. This guy had been booking then rescheduling then booking and rescheduling appointments for months now. It was exhausting and really annoying.

And Tony didn't even know the full case. The man was extremely selective with what he told him. Tony needed to have all the information before he could start.

He's been on cases where not a lot of information was given to him but he could tell this guy was holding stuff back. Tony's been doing this job for long enough to know what was going on.

"Third time in a month." Said Tony. He picked up a pen to twirl it in his hand as he spoke. "You sure you don't wanna go for a forth?"

"No. I've been... busy these past three months so now that I've finally got things under control, I'd like to go ahead with our appointment."

Tony pulled out his book. He wasn't very organized but at least he kept his black book extremely up to date and organized. "I'm a very busy man. I have one opening tomorrow but if you reschedule again, I'm not going to be able to fit you in for a while."

There was silence on the other end for a few moments where Tony thought he hung up.

"Alright. Put me down for tomorrow."

Tony wrote it down and shut his book, opening up a file on his computer. "Okay. Now, anything you say to me is confidential. It stays between us. Although I need more information from you,

what are their names?”

The other end was silent for a few moments so Tony audibly sighed. “I-”

“How about we go over this tomorrow.”

“Can you email me a picture of your wife and son?”

He heard some papers ruffling in the background. “I think it’s best if we talk about this tomorrow during our appointment.”

“So far you’ve told me your wife and son are missing and that you know they’re in New York because you tracked the car here. I need more information than that if you want me to find them. I need their names, pictures, work histories you know of, ages-”

“My son is eight years old and my wife is twenty eight.”

Tony shook his head and put his head in his hands. There were about ten thousand eight year old boys in New York and the same amount of twenty eight year old women. That wasn’t enough. He wrote it down anyways.

He already got a bad feeling about this case. Starting with the fact that the man rescheduled so many times. Normally, when a wife and son go missing, the fathers first instinct is to call the cops. This told Tony that they perhaps ran away. Considering the mom got pregnant at twenty, makes Tony believe that it was a forced relationship and marriage.

He usually dealt with cases finding ex boyfriends or girlfriends and occasionally worked with the police to find missing children. This case though, it made Tony feel... odd.

“I’m going to need more than that before I can begin my investigation.”

“Of course. We’ll talk tomorrow. I look forward to meeting you tomorrow, Tony Stark.”

Tony closed his book and leaned back in his chair. “I look forward to meeting you as well, Ben Parker.”

Chapter End Notes

Ahhh Tony and Pepper met and Tony is a private investigator!

Did you guys think the man they met in the first chapter was Tony?

Surround me

Chapter Notes

Im so glad that you guys are liking this fic! I can't wait until things start to unravel

I'm so busy with work and school that I have no time to write but I'm still going to be posting this fic regularly:) I'm going to be posting it every Thursdays and Saturdays

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"I don't want to wake up." Peter pulled the blankets back over his head. It was cold in their apartment and even colder outside. He wanted to stay in bed all day and stay warm.

Plus he hated his new school. He felt like he couldn't make any friends because he had to lie to them about everything and even though he knew all the lies off by heart, he sometimes got confused with what was the truth and what was a lie.

Pepper pulled the blankets off of him and lifted him up. "Come on, Peter. Stop acting like this." She carried him into the bathroom and placed him on his feet, making sure he had his balance before letting him go. "Brush your teeth and go pee. We can't be late for school." *Again.*

Peter stomped his feet. "I don't *wanna* go to school! I hate school. I wanna go to the park. With you."

Pepper kneeled down in front of him. "Baby. Mommy has to go to work to make money. And you have to go to school because you're too young to stay here alone. And you need to learn so you can get a good job."

Peter pulled away from her. "I don't want a job. I just want to stay with you always. No job."

Pepper sighed. She felt bad but she couldn't be late for work again. Her boss was already on her ass. "I have to go to work, Peter. I can't be late and so you have to go to school." She pulled off his pyjama shirt followed by his pyjama pants then lifted him onto the toilet. "Go pee. I'm going to get breakfast ready for you so be quick."

Peter rubbed aggressively at his eyes. He hated this. He hated being rushed every morning and

having to wake up at 6am. It was too early. He hated it. He also hated how he was the first one at his before school program and the last. It was lonely and he hated it.

He walked into the bedroom and crawled back into bed. He wasn't in the mood to go to school today. He was there for almost twelve hours a day and it was way too much.

Pepper poured the milk into the oatmeal but it was the last of the milk. She couldn't afford to buy more until she got paid next Friday.

"Peter. Breakfast." She walked into the bedroom to get dressed but Peter was lying in bed again. She sighed loudly. "Peter. We don't have time for this. Wake up. Get up and get dressed."

Peter forced out some cries. He hated school and he hated his mom for making him go. "No!"

Pepper grabbed underwear, pants and a shirt then placed them on top of Peter. "Get dressed. I really can't be late for work, Peter. We need to make money." She already drained her bank account and savings. Not that there was all that much in there to begin with.

It was difficult to get Peter dressed and out the door but once they were ready, they had to race to the school so Pepper grabbed ahold of Peter's hand and pulled him a bit faster than his tiny legs could carry him.

"Mommy! Stop walking so fast. I'm *tired!*" Peter started crying. He was tired and in a bad mood and he didn't want to spend the next twelve hours at school.

The sun wasn't even up yet and since they didn't live in the safest part of the city, Pepper was always so scared walking to and from Peter's school and her work. She wanted to buy a car so then that way, they could at least have a quick and safe transportation but it wasn't even a possibility right now.

"Mommy!" Peter cried, practically refusing to walk.

Pepper lifted him up and held him awkwardly. She was carrying her purse and her bag for work on top of now Peter and his backpack.

It was a tiring and difficult walk but she made it to the school and walked into the kindergarten classroom where the before and after school program was held. “Okay. I gotta run. Give me a hug and kiss bye, baby, I’ll pick you up at six.”

Once Peter was placed on his feet, he jumped up and down for Pepper to pick him back up and *cried*. “ Noooo! No no nooo! Don’t go! Don’t *go!*”

Pepper pulled Peter’s hands off of her blouse. “I’m sorry. I have to. Try to have a good day at school, Peter. I’ll see you later.” It broke her heart as she forcefully had to pull away from her crying child and walk out the door.

They only got to see each other during the early morning hours and the hours before bed. This wasn’t the life she wanted to give Peter. It wasn’t fair to him... or her.

She made it to work one minute before her start time and signed in then walked into her office to start working but as soon as she sat down, her boss walked in. “Pepper. You’re late. May I add, again.”

Pepper had red rosy cheeks and she was sweating after being out in the cold and running to now being in a heated building. At least she didn’t fall on her way in again. “I’m sorry, sir. My son was having a difficult morning and-”

“We all have problems, Pepper. My wife wants a divorce. And yet, I’m still on time and not making excuses.”

Pepper needed this job so she forced a smile and nodded then picked up the file on her desk. “Yes. It won’t happen again.” She walked over to him and handed over the file. “Here you go.”

“This was supposed to be on my desk yesterday at three.” He took it from her then left her office, shutting the door behind him with a loud bang that made her flinch.

She wanted to cry.

Before Ben, she never would have let someone talk to her the way her boss did, she was strong and knew what she wanted and wasn’t going to let anyone talk down to her. But then Ben came along and messed up her mind, belittling her and making her believe she wasn’t good enough.

Now, she had trouble standing up for herself.

She looked out her window and sighed. It was just past seven in the morning and she had a full day ahead of her. Never mind the fact that Peter had a full day ahead of him as well. That part killed her, knowing she was doing everything she possibly could to give Peter a good life yet it was still not good enough and that was on her.

By the time noon rolled around, Pepper grabbed her purse and double checked she had enough change to walk over to the cafe nearby and grab something to eat. She hasn't had enough time to get breakfast so she was hungry and her head was spinning.

Plus she just needed to get out of that work environment for an hour.

The first thing she did was walk into the cafe and go into the bathroom to fix herself up a bit. Her hair was a mess. She had lipstick smeared on her teeth for who knows how long and her clothes were all over the place. Once she got herself straightened out, she walked up to the counter to order, trying to find the cheapest item on the menu. "Could I please have a sandwich with herbal tea?" She pulled out her wallet but someone walked up behind her.

"I got it. And can you throw a coffee on top of that. Two sugars. One cream."

Pepper looked up at the familiar voice.

He smiled at her. "Pepper, right? It's funny bumping into you again. Two times in two days."

Pepper was a bit concerned now. "Tony, right?"

"Yep."

She forced a smile. "You don't have to um, pay for my stuff. It's okay."

He looked at her with such a genuine smile that made her stomach flutter and she felt like she was

back in high school. But the concern took over again.

“I got it. I don’t mind at all.” He tapped his card on the machine, paying for her order.

“Are you following me?” She blurted out before she could really think of what she was accusing him of.

Tony chuckled. “What? No. I come here everyday at noon to get a coffee. It’s sort of a part of my routine. So maybe I should ask you if you’re following me.”

Pepper was a bit too paranoid. She laughed and Tony raised his eyebrows at her. “Well... are you?”

“Oh. No. No, not at all. I just work down the street and I decided to come here on my lunch break.” She mentally cursed. *Great. Why don’t I tell him my social security number while I’m at it.*

Tony only laughed and moved to hand her her tea and sandwich before grabbing his coffee. “Great. So you’ve got some time to sit down and chat.”

Pepper found her legs following him to the corner of the cafe where there was an empty seat. She sat down across from him and couldn’t wipe the smile off her face. It’s been so long since she’s been on a first date. In fact, she’s only ever had one first date in her life. Not that she was comparing this to a first date at all.

Tony took a sip of his coffee and leaned back on his seat. The way he sat and carried himself screamed confidence and power. Pepper was drawn to him but she was scared to open up. She took a sip of her tea. “So I’m guessing you’re not on your lunch break.” She said.

Tony smiled. “And why do you guess that?”

Did I offend him? Oh gosh. “No. I just meant... you come here everyday at noon so I’m just assuming you don’t work for anyone.”

“Oh. You’re smart. I like smart.” He took another sip of his coffee. “And actually you’re right, I

work for myself so I kinda make my own hours.”

Pepper nodded, curious but not wanting to be too nosy. “So what do you do, Tony?”

“I’m kinda like…” He hesitated. “I help people in difficult situations.” He summed it up, not wanting to tell her he was a private investigator. People seemed to run at that and he didn’t want Pepper to run from him.

She slowly nodded, thinking about it. “I see. So kinda like a therapist?”

“I guess you could say that.” Tony took another sip. “And what do you do? You don’t have to answer me if that’s too personal.”

Pepper looked down at her sandwich and took a bite so she could chew and pause to decide if she wanted to answer that. That was personal but not really. It was only personal because she didn’t trust anyone. Especially not adult males. She decided it couldn’t hurt to give the man at least some information.

“I work at a real estate agency. It’s very small, I just started working there two months ago and I’m pretty sure they opened up about a month before that.” She joked, causing Tony to laugh. She didn’t mean to make him laugh, she was just telling a stupid joke about how unprofessional her work was.

“That bad, huh?” Tony laughed.

“Yeah,” *it pays the bills and keeps a roof over our head and puts food on the table so it’s everything to me.* “I can’t complain. My office chair is very comfortable so I got that to look forward to after this sandwich is done.”

Tony laughed again. A real laugh. Pepper forgot what it felt like to laugh with someone again.

“Speaking of office chairs, the one in my office is so old. I keep meaning to get a new one but I keep forgetting, every time I go to sit on it, I feel like the back is gonna snap off and I’m going to fall on my ass.”

“Oh!” Pepper laughed. “That happened to me before. Only I was holding a tea in my hand.”

“Okay. I gotta hear this story.”

And so the two of them talked as if they had been friends for years until Pepper’s lunch break was over and she had to start making it back to the office.

Dread filled her stomach at the thought. She loved talking with Tony because it came so easily to them. It was as if they had been coming to this cafe for years and talked to each other every day. And now she had to go back to reality.

Pepper checked her phone and sighed. “I’m sorry to end this so short but I gotta get back to work.” She grabbed her garbage and threw it out then grabbed her purse. “Thank you for lunch. It was a lot of fun.”

Tony stood up with her. “Can I drive you back to work?”

“Um-”

“I don’t mind at all. I finished my work for the day so I don’t have anywhere I need to be. Plus I don’t want you to have to walk back in this weather.”

Peter was agreeing before she even realized what she was doing. “Sure. I just work up the street actually.”

Tony walked her out to his car and grabbed ahold of her hand so she didn’t slip. “That’s fine. It’ll save you from falling in the snow again.”

Pepper was still embarrassed over what happened yesterday. “Oh. I think I better walk then just for your entertainment.”

“Next time.” Tony shut the car door and got into the driver's seat, starting the car and driving down the street. “I’m trying to heat it up but I don’t wanna make you late.”

It wasn't even a three minute drive to her work and it made Pepper miss the convenience of owning a car. Although now Tony knew where she worked, she didn't seem to mind, though. He was kind. He was genuine and although she barely knew the man, she could feel like she could trust him.

He pulled into a parking space and put the car in park. "Enjoy your comfy chair."

Pepper laughed. "Oh. I will. And thank you for driving me. And for lunch. Thank you."

Tony placed his hand on her thigh but quickly removed it when she flinched. "Sorry. Uh, you're welcome. I'll um, wait till you get inside."

Pepper grabbed her purse and left. Why did she have to flinch. She ruined a completely good time out with a really good guy all because she had to act like a victim of abuse. She was a victim of abuse but she didn't want to act like it. She wanted to forget about that part of her life and move on with Peter and be happy and not flinch whenever a man lays his hands on her.

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Tony checked the time and walked into the cafe.

He knew they would be here at this time and he wanted them to arrive first so he could get a feel for what they were like.

Once they walked into the bathroom, Tony took a seat at one of the benches and waited for them to walk out of the bathroom before approaching them. "Ben Parker." Tony greeted and stuck his hand out for the man.

Ben was caught off guard. Tony enjoyed doing that to people.

"Oh. Tony Stark. Yes. It's nice to meet you."

Tony smiled, his fake smile he used when he was working. “Shall we take a seat and get started.”

The two men walked over to an empty booth and sat down. Tony started. “Did you bring pictures?”

Ben looked like he hadn't slept in weeks and he smelt a bit like alcohol. He had a dirty coat on and looked homeless, in fact, Tony would have thought he was homeless if he wasn't sitting across from him. Tony charged expensive fees and he knew Ben wouldn't be sitting across from him if he couldn't afford him.

“Look, this is more complicated than you know.”

Tony leaned back in the booth. He didn't even know why he was wasting his time with this. “Ben. I can't help you find your wife and son if I don't know their names, what they look like, anything. All I know are their ages and that's just not enough.”

Ben pulled out his phone with a receipt on it. “My wife sold my car three months ago to a guy named Daniel Faraday. It was a private sale. He gave her all cash.”

“How do you know he gave her all cash?”

“Because I've been keeping an eye on her bank account.”

Tony sighed. He had a feeling this case wasn't going to be worth his trouble. “She could have cancelled that bank account and took your name off. They also could be long gone by now. Three months is a long time. Why are you just coming to me now?”

Ben was shaking his leg so fast that Tony was surprised it didn't hurt. “ *Because* I told you it's complicated.”

Tony scuffed. “Complicated? All the cases I've been on have been complicated. That's why people come to me. Look,” He handed him his phone back. “I can't help you. I need names, I need pictures, I need *something* to go off of.”

Ben looked around the cafe as if he were looking for someone so Tony brought his attention back to him. “Look, I’ll do this for you but I need more information on it. If you’re unwilling to give it to me, then good luck. You have until Friday to get what I’m asking, if not, I’m not taking your case on.”

Ben stood up and held his hand out for Tony to shake. “I’ll get it for you. Talk to you soon.” With that, he walked out of the cafe and left.

With a sigh, Tony put his head in his hands. He felt like Ben wanted to tell him but for some reason, he kept avoiding him and not giving him the information he needed when Tony was the one trying to help *him*.

He stood up and was about to leave when a familiar face walked into the cafe. Tony watched her walk into the bathroom and was about to leave but something told him to stay so he waited until she walked up to the cashier then he approached her.

“I got it.” He walked up beside her and spoke to the cashier. “And can you throw a coffee on top of that.” He could see Pepper looking at him out of the corner of his eyes. “Two sugars. One cream.”

He looked down at her and smiled. She was so beautiful. He always fancied women with blonde hair but woman with strawberry blonde hair, that was something else. “Pepper, right?” He remembered. “It’s funny bumping into you again. Two times in two days.”

Chapter End Notes

Did you guys understand the ending?

So Ben came into the restaurant before Pepper walked in. Then Tony met Pepper again AFTER his meeting with Ben.

To me you're everything

Chapter Notes

I went tobogganing today and it was so much fun! I wasn't going to go because I had school but school can wait, making memories and having fun can't wait!

I'm so glad you guys are enjoying this fic:)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Pepper was *so* relieved to make it to Peter's school before six o'clock.

In fact, she arrived just after 5:30pm and it was the earliest she's ever been since Peter started going to the program. There were even two other children left.

Pepper walked into the classroom and watched Peter playing on the carpet with the other two boys. The sight brought a smile to her face. It seemed like the two of them had a very good day.

Maybe things were starting to look up for them, at least things couldn't get any worse from this morning.

"Peter."

Peter turned his head to look at his mom and squealed. "Mommy! You're here early!" He ran over to her and hugged her tightly. "I missed you. I wanna go home now."

Pepper leaned down to give Peter a proper hug. "I missed you too. Get your stuff on and let's go home." While Peter went to gather his things, Pepper approached the teacher and handed her five dollars from yesterday. "Sorry again. It won't happen again."

She took it from Pepper with barely a word. Pepper got the vibe that she didn't like her job very much and it upset her because she would love to get to work there and get to be with Peter and play with the other children.

"Let's go." She grabbed a hold of Peter's hand and began walking home with him as she listened to

him tell her about his day. He didn't mention anything about this morning which Pepper was grateful for. Kids were resilient. And Peter was tough so... so she hoped they didn't have another morning like that again.

Once they arrived at their apartment, Pepper had Peter stomp the snow off his boots so they didn't track it inside. They walked past the front desk but were called over. "Ms. Moore?"

Pepper almost ignored the man, still not used to that last name yet. "Oh. Yes?" She looked over at him and led Peter in that direction. She could tell by the man's face that it wasn't good news. "What's wrong?"

Were they going to shut off our hot water? Or were they going to turn the power off in our unit?

Pepper squeezed Peter's hand.

"Ma'am. I'm sorry to have to do this." The man couldn't look her in the eyes. "But... I'm afraid we're going to have to evict you."

All the life drained from her. They were homeless. No. *No.*

"Excuse me. Evict us? I was a few weeks late for last month's rent and I paid every cent of it eventually. I'm just a few days late for this month's rent, once I get paid next Friday, I'll have enough and I'll pay it."

The man looked regretful. "I'm sorry, Ms. Moore. But rent for this month was due last week. Look... I'm just doing my job, I'm afraid it's not up to me. My boss--"

"Oh your boss. Then get your boss out here. Let me speak to him."

"Ma'am--"

"Let me talk to your boss!"

Peter whimpered. “Mommy. You’re scaring me. Stop it.”

Pepper sighed. She forced a smile and kneeled down so she was at Peter’s height. “How about you go sit over there on the couches while I talk to this man. I’ll be quick. Go sit over there, Peter.”

It wasn’t a choice. It was an order. Peter walked over to the couches and plopped himself down. He didn’t know what was going on but he was scared.

Another man walked out and Pepper had only seen him once when she rented out the apartment. “Can I help you, ma’am?”

“ *Yes*. You can’t evict me. I’m paying rent. I haven’t missed a month.”

“You’ve been late the first two months and you haven’t paid this month’s rent yet. It was due last week.” The owner said. He looked unimpressed and didn’t seem to care about what was going on. He didn’t seem to care that he was trying to put a single mom and a child out on the streets.

Pepper leaned her head against the front desk. She was so desperate. “ *I didn’t know* that. I will pay rent. *I promise*. Please. I just need until next Friday.”

“Ms. Moore. This isn’t a pawnshop. You don’t pay when you want. This is just business. If you can’t pay rent on time, I’ll have no trouble finding someone who can. You need to pack your things and leave.”

Pepper cried. She gestured to Peter behind her who was sitting on the couch a few feet away. “It’s November. You’re going to kick us out in November?! It’s *freezing* outside. We have nowhere else to go.”

The man crossed his arms over his chest. “Do I need to call security?”

“ *Security?! I should call the police on you*. This is... it’s-it’s-it’s, I’m a single mom. I have an eight year old son. You can’t kick us out on the streets. Where else are we going to *go?! I*”

The owner looked at the worker behind the desk then looked back at Pepper. “That’s not my

problem. If you want to rent from me, you have to pay me and you're not. This isn't your first warning. But it is your last. You're gone. You need to pack your things and leave."

"You son of a bitch! *You son of a bitch!* I have a *child!* I have a fucking child and you're going to throw us out on the streets in the middle of the night in November?! It's freezing outside." Pepper smacked his chest, practically crying against him.

The man grabbed her arms. "Okay. Okay! You've got until tomorrow at noon to get your stuff out of here. Otherwise I will personally be kicking you out. Tomorrow at noon."

Pepper stepped away from him and wiped her tears away. "Thank you." She quietly said then walked away. "Come on, Peter."

Peter immediately ran over to his mom, concern written all over his face. "Mommy? What's wrong? What's ev-ev-evi... that word the big man said mean?"

Pepper walked into the elevator and grabbed onto his hand, squeezing it tightly. "It means that we have to go find a new place to live."

Peter looked down at his feet. "Oh."

Pepper held her tears in until Peter was asleep tonight.

"Yeah. So we're going to pack all our stuff away and then tomorrow night, we're going to be somewhere else." She had no idea where they were going to go. This was the cheapest possible place she could rent that wasn't a halfway home for drug addicts.

Sleeping in the park would be safer than that. Which it may actually come down to it.

Peter frowned. "Somewhere new? But I like our new house, mommy. I don't want to go somewhere new."

Pepper was trying not to cry. She worked *so hard* to be able to afford this apartment. It was small and outdated but it was everything to them. It was their home. After today, they were going to be

homeless and Pepper had no idea how that was going to work out with a child and it being the start of winter.

They were screwed.

Once they got to their front door, Peter tried to grab the keys from her. "I wanna do it. Mommy, let me do it."

"Peter. No. Not right now." She dropped the keys since Peter was tugging on her arm and when she went to bend down to pick it up, she accidentally kneed Peter in the face, causing him to fall onto his butt and start crying. "Oh Peter." Pepper sighed and opened the door then placed her bags inside along with Peter's backpack then walked back out to pick him up and carry him inside.

"Shh shh. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you." Pepper didn't bother taking her shoes off. She walked into the living room and sat down, rocking Peter on her lap. "You're okay, look. No bumps or cuts."

Peter cried harder and pushed her hands away from himself. "*Don't!*" He cried.

Pepper gave up. She was too exhausted to try and comfort him so she just sat on the couch and cried with him.

They were going to lose their apartment.

In a matter of hours, they were going to be homeless and have nowhere to go.

Pepper looked around the small apartment they were able to call home for the past three months. It was small but it gave them a warm place to stay with a roof over their heads and a fridge with food in it. Now all of that was going to be gone. They didn't even have a suitcase to put their clothes in.

All they had was one duffle bag that wouldn't be nearly enough space for all of their belongings.

After a while of sitting there, Peter looked up at Pepper and wiped a tear off her cheek. "Mommy? Don't cry. It'll be okay."

Those words only made Pepper cry harder. “Oh baby. I’m supposed to be telling *you* that.”

Peter sat up straighter. “It’s okay. I can say it for the both of us.”

Pepper nodded and pulled Peter against her chest, holding him tight and trying to think of any possibility where this was going to end up okay.

She tried her best to force a smile on her face as she got Peter ready for bed. They were going to be sleeping on the streets a day from now, they weren’t even going to be given a two week eviction notice, it was less than a day.

She had to check her bank account but they may have enough money to spend a night in a motel. Then that could give her some extra time to get them back on their feet and hopefully into a home or *anything*.

Peter got his pyjamas on and laid in the bed, sticking his thumb in his mouth and reaching a lazy hand out for Pepper. “Stay with me?”

“No, honey. Mommy has to get some stuff ready for tomorrow, okay?” She caressed his still chubby cheeks. “I’ll come to bed shortly.”

The eight year old whimpered. “Stay with me.”

She leaned down to give him a kiss. “Shh. Close your eyes and think of happy thoughts.”

Reluctantly, Peter shut his tired eyes and tried to relax, quickly falling asleep. That was when Pepper left. As soon as she quietly shut the bedroom door, she silently broke down against it, falling to the floor.

All these sudden regrets started coming to her mind. Maybe she shouldn’t have left Ben? Maybe they were better off with him, at least that way Peter wouldn’t have to worry about living on the streets. Now, he was going to grow up and tell everyone he had an abusive father, a weak mom and he was homeless.

The thought of Christmas coming up soon and how she's not going to be able to afford a tree, never mind presents for Peter.

Pepper had to force herself to be tough though. She pulled herself up from the ground and grabbed the duffle bag from the hallway closet and began packing all of their clothes, shoes, towels and necessities.

She looked at the couch, tv and bed and knew that they were going to have to leave it behind. She had nowhere to bring it. She couldn't even afford movers to take it anywhere so that was a waste of \$400 right there.

Pepper put all their food into plastic bags but had no idea where to put it. She couldn't bring five plastic bags worth of food into work with her tomorrow. And she definitely couldn't leave it anywhere.

She would figure that out tomorrow, tomorrow when they were officially homeless.

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Pepper was helping Peter get his pants on while she called her work, waiting for her boss to pick up.

"It's too tight, mommy! I don't want to wear these pants." Peter kicked them off. He got to sleep in an extra hour but that extra hour didn't do anything.

Pepper sighed but her boss answered. "Hello?"

"Hello. Good morning, I'm not going to be able to make it in until later this morning." She walked out of the bedroom to speak to him, away from Peter.

“Pepper. This is very last minute. You have to put in a request for time off, two weeks ahead of time. This is the morning of.”

“I know. And I’m sorry for that. Just... some personal stuff came up and-”

“We all have personal stuff going on in our lives.”

Pepper nodded, bracing herself against the counter. “I will be in at noon today.” She hung up the phone after that and took a calming breath but she didn’t have much time since she had to get Peter to school. “Baby, you’re going to have breakfast at school. Put your pants on.”

“Stop rushing me!”

“I’m sorry but you have to get to school then I have to come back here and finish getting all of our stuff out of our apartment.”

Peter screamed through his teeth. “No! I don’t want to leave. I want to stay here and *not go to school!*”

Pepper stood him up and pulled his jeans on him. Peter used to be such a happy boy despite who his father was... is.

Now, he was miserable for most of the day, tired, irritable and stressed. And he was eight years old. Not the life Pepper ever wanted to give to her son.

They were out the door and of course Peter made a scene walking to his school in the streets *and* he developed some sort of separation anxiety and didn’t want to leave Pepper at before school drop off, causing Pepper to have to be the bad guy and force him off of her so she could go back home and finish packing away all of their things.

She managed to shove most of it into the duffle bag, along with the bedding which took up most room.

Pepper saw that it was 11:30am so she had to get going. She gave one last look at the apartment

then shut the door, locking it and walking into the elevator.

This was extremely difficult.

Not the fact that they were not homeless, well that too, but the fact that she had to walk thirty minutes to work with her purse, a duffel bag that weighed about twenty pounds of clothes, and five bags of food.

When she arrived at her office, she dropped everything in the corner and collapsed into her chair, putting her head in her hands. She was ten minutes late but there was nothing to do about it now. Luckily her boss hadn't noticed.

She shouldn't have thought anything because her office door was opening and in he walked. "Pepper. So nice of you to join our team. You think this is acceptable?"

It was only noon and she was already exhausted. She forced a smile. "I'm sorry. It won't happen again."

He stared at her for a few seconds then left.

Pepper opened up her computer and had to do something that took all the dignity she had left as a person; look up prices for tents.

They were expensive. She had only ever gone camping once in her life and she hated it. Now it just may be her life.

After a bit of searching, she decided that she could either afford a motel for two nights or a tent.

She would prefer the motel but that wasn't a permanent solution. They needed a place they could stay and not have to worry about having to leave. She began laughing. This was ridiculous. A tent. *A fucking tent.* They were going to live in a tent.

That was the life they lived now. Instead of going home to an abusive man, they went home to a tent.

Pepper couldn't stop laughing.

The office door opened up without so much as a knock and in walked two men and a woman, she was young and bright looking. Pepper stood up. "Um... hello?"

"Pepper," Said her boss, then he walked into her office and shut the door behind him so it was just the two of them in there. "Your behaviour is unacceptable. You were on probation and if you've ever had a job before, you know exactly how that works."

"I was? I was on probation? What the hell does that mean?!"

He sighed and looked away. "It means you're fired. Effective immediately."

"*Fired?*" Pepper crossed the distance between the two of them. "Fired?! You're firing me? For-for *what?* For coming in at noon today? For having to leave early to pick my son up from school? I'm making all the sacrifices I can for this job!"

He remained calm. "It's just not working out. You come in late almost everyday. You need to leave early everyday despite your hours being until six. It's ridiculous. You show up... dressed like that."

Pepper looked down at herself. Okay. She had no excuse for that. She was wearing dirty running shoes and her pants had stains on it, her top was a bit too low of a cut and her hair wasn't styled or brushed. She looked up at her boss. "You can't fire me. You can't. I-I am doing everything I *can*. *Please. Please.*"

He shook his head. "It's already done. We already found your replacement."

"Wha-her? *Her?* You're showing her around while I'm here?!" Pepper yelled and ran a shaky hand through her knotted hair. "You can't do this. You *can't*. I-I just got evicted from my house. I-I-I have a son."

He shrugged and walked to the door to leave. "It's just business."

Pepper narrowed her eyes at him. “You have to give me a two week notice by law. You at least owe me that much.”

“You’ll be getting a check when you leave today. Cash it. Don’t come back.”

He shut the door and Pepper fell to her knees, silently crying.

How did this happen? How did she let this happen? She couldn’t hold a job. She couldn’t hold a household. What if someone came to take Peter? Oh god, if anyone knew, they would take him. Pepper wouldn’t be able to get him back. What if Ben took him?

Pepper ran into the bathroom and threw up.

Nothing came up besides bile. She forgot to eat. The last time she ate was with Tony... Tony.

She forgot about the amazing lunch... date... they had together yesterday. Back when she wasn’t evicted or fired from her job. She thought he was handsome and kind and after he dropped her off at her work, she was looking forward to going back to the cafe and seeing him again but she wasn’t going to be doing that anymore.

Not that she would even try to go for him anyways. He seemed well off, he had money, a job, a house, and here she was, homeless and jobless.

Pepper gathered all her belongings as she tried to pull herself together.

She then headed out of her office and placed her office keys on the front desk, without saying a word.

It was just after three so she would be able to go to Peter’s school and pick him up early. The children ate food until 3:30 so she walked slowly, wanting him to have the chance to actually eat a snack before taking him home... no, not home.

She didn't know where they were going to go.

Chapter End Notes

Okayyyy so I know (think) normally someone won't just evict a single young mom and a child so suddenly but for the sake of this fic let's pretend it's realistic

We'll never know what it's like to be free

Chapter Notes

Here's another chapter:) enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter had an awful day.

It was because of what was going on in his personal life but he didn't know how to tell anyone or what he would even say so he stayed in a bad mood.

By the time he was brought down to his after school program, he plopped himself down in a seat and crossed his arms over his chest. He wasn't in the mood for anything. He wanted to go home.

He picked at his snack quietly and right as he was about to throw his plate in the garbage, he saw his mom standing at the door. "Mommy!"

Pepper leaned down and hugged him. "Hi Peter. How was school today?"

Peter jumped into her arms. "You're here before the sun went down!"

That hurt a bit to hear. It was a reminder that Pepper wasn't there for Peter during the day, only with him for dinner, bath time and bedtime.

She squeezed him. "Yeah, I am. How about you get your stuff on and we go home?" That was the wrong thing to say.

Peter tilted his head at her. "But we don't have a home anymore."

Pepper looked up at the teacher who was looking at them. It was obvious she heard. "No, don't be silly. We're going home now. Get your things." While Peter went to do that, Pepper walked up to the teacher. "Due to my hours at work changing, I'm going to be pulling Peter from this program."

“Oh. Alright. You have to do that on our schools website. Will he be coming tomorrow and Friday? Since you pay weekly.”

Pepper wanted to say no but that was breakfast for Peter, an extra few hours in warmth and a snack after school. She would be an idiot to not say yes. “Yes. Those will be his last days.”

“Alright.”

Peter grabbed onto his mom's hand. “Can we go to the park tonight?”

Pepper walked out of the school. She had left all their stuff by the door so she didn't have to carry it all inside. “Let's see. It's going to be cold tonight.” *We might be sleeping at the park tonight.* She thought but didn't say... not yet.

She carried the duffle bag and her purse over her shoulder and the food bags in her other hand so she could still hold onto her son's tiny, warm hand.

“Mommy? Are we going back home? To our apartment?”

“No, baby.”

“Oh.” Peter walked through a puddle of melted, dirty snow. “Then where are we going?”

“Um...” Pepper wished it was summer out. That way, she could put up a tent in the park and it wouldn't look so strange and if anyone asked, she could just say she was stargazing with her son. But it was winter and if someone caught them, they'd take Peter away from her. “We're going to go to a motel tonight.”

She wasn't going to have to pay for Peter's childcare so she could save money on that and with the check from work, they could stay in a motel for the night until she could figure out what to do.

Peter nodded and walked along his mom, heading in the opposite direction of their apartment. “Are

we going to stay in the motel forever now?"

"No. Just... just for a night or two." Honestly, Pepper wished they had the money to be able to afford a motel until they found a place to live but it wasn't an option within their budget.

Maybe if she was able to keep her job... but a motel was \$60 a night. That quickly added up.

Peter sighed but frowned when they walked into the bank. "Where are we going, mommy?"

"I have to cash a check from work so we have money to stay at the motel." She placed the bags on the dirty ground and looked at her surroundings. She wasn't familiar with this area so she needed to get to the motel before the sun went down. "Can you stand there with our stuff?"

Peter dug in the food bags. "Is this gonna be our dinner?"

"Yeah, baby."

She got the money out and shoved it into her pocket. She liked to pay cash for things, terrified that Ben was somehow going to track her through her card transactions. She didn't know. She was beyond paranoid.

"You have to walk faster, Peter." She said, trying to pull Peter along. The sun was already setting and they were still quite a bit of a walk from the motel. She saw a group of men sitting on the curb by a convenience store and she got a really bad feeling about it so she stopped and waited for the traffic to clear to j-walk across the busy road, just to avoid them.

"Faster, Peter. The sun is going down."

Peter groaned. "I can't! I'm tired and my legs don't want to walk anymore. I want to go back home!"

Pepper stopped to look at him. "Peter. We can't go home! We got kicked out! Now we have to live somewhere else but you have *to walk!* Let's *go.*"

Peter began crying as Pepper forced him to walk the rest of the distance to the motel. It was small, with only about twenty rooms that Pepper could see so she prayed that there was a room open for them.

She pushed open the front doors and the smell that greeted her assaulted her nose and made her eyes burn. It smelt like dust, old carpets, cigarettes and a very strong air freshener.

She ignored it and approached the front desk. "Excuse me, I'd like a room for two. One adult. One child."

The woman looked like she was in no rush. She sat up a bit on her chair to see Peter over the counter. "No kids."

"What?"

"No. Kids."

She couldn't believe this. "What? Are you serious? I'm a single mom with a young boy. We just got evicted from our apartment and we need somewhere to stay."

The woman, who looked like she hadn't ran a brush through her hair since she was a kid herself, turned a sign over so Pepper could read it. *No kids. No pets.*

Pepper rolled her eyes at the older woman. "C'mon. It's dark out."

The woman shrugged and Pepper wanted to slap her. She had stained yellow teeth and Pepper was sure all the cigarette scent was coming from her alone. Her dyed blonde, dry hair was sticking up in every direction and Pepper was never one to judge a person by their appearance, she knew she wasn't looking the best herself right now but come on.

"Ma'am, no kids. The other attendants don't like the noise." She gestured to Peter who was still crying.

Pepper pulled Peter against her side. “He’s a *child*. It’s just for one night. He won’t make any noise. I promise.”

She shook her head and the phone rang so she made a motion with her hand, shoos them away.

Pepper slammed her hands down on the counter. She was not able to take this crap *again*. She reached over to hang up the phone. “You listen to me, you give me a fucking room *right now* or a swear to god I’m gonna reach across that counter and rip your heart out of your chest!”

The woman was too stunned to speak.

Pepper wasn’t going to be nice about this. The next motel was a twenty minute walk away and it was cold and dark out and completely unsafe. This woman was not going to kick them out on the street. Pepper wasn’t going to let it happen.

Finally, the woman grabbed a key and handed it to Pepper. “Here. First payment is tomorrow before noon.”

“Thank you.” Pepper picked up their bags and walked outside, pulling Peter along. “Come, Peter. We’re in room 17. Can you help me find it?”

Peter always loved helping find the room numbers when they went to hotels but he didn’t seem to care one bit now. Pepper didn’t blame him. “Mommy. I’m tired.”

“I know. We’re going to bed soon.” She found the room and unlocked it, letting Peter in first and locking it behind them. Take off your shoes and go wash your hands. We’re going to eat a quick dinner and wash up for bed.”

Peter stayed where he was as Pepper turned the lamps on and cranked the heat up. “What’s wrong?”

“You yelled at the girl.”

She didn’t want Peter to hear that but it was the only way she was going to get them a room. She

sat on the only bed in the room and pulled Peter to stand in front of her. “I know. And it was very rude of me. I don’t want you to talk to anyone like that. Ever. I just got mad... and I didn’t want her to send us back into the cold, dark streets.”

The realization that they may have to do that soon was terrifying for her.

Peter yawned. “You said you’re gonna rip her heart out.”

Pepper pushed the curls out of his beautiful face. “To be honest, I don’t think I would have found a heart in there to begin with.”

Peter didn’t laugh. He didn’t have any reaction so Pepper stood up and picked up one of the bags that had milk, carrots, bread, peanut butter and jam. It was going to be a sad dinner but they had to use up the milk and carrots before it went bad anyways.

Peter sat at the table and watched Pepper get it ready. She only brought two plates from their apartment since that was all she could take so it was all they had.

Once dinner was over, Peter drank his milk and Pepper led him into the bathroom. The bathtub was blue. It made Peter giggle and Pepper cringe.

“I’m just going to give you a quick shower because this bathtub isn’t that clean, honey.”

Peter shook his head. “No shower. Bath, mommy.”

Pepper pulled his shirt off of him and tugged his pants and underwear off. “I’ll be quick. You have to have a shower because there’s not going to be enough hot water for a bath, Peter. It’ll be cold.”

“Noooo. I want a bath. I don’t care if it’s cold.”

Pepper pressed a kiss to his forehead and turned the shower on while Peter screamed. “Shh. You have to be quiet. Come, I’ll hold your hand the whole time.”

“No. No no no.”

“Peter, c’mon.”

“Noooo! I don’t want to. Nooo!” He went to run out of the bathroom so Pepper grabbed his arm and lifted him up. “Noooo!”

“You have to because I don’t know the next time we’re going to shower.” She placed him in the shower and listened to him cry. “I forgot the shampoo and body wash so stay here.”

Peter sobbed. “Mommy!” Peter saw her leave so he stepped out of the shower and slipped, falling onto his butt and crying harder. “*Mommy!*”

“On baby. Shh shh. You’re okay. That’s why I told you to stay still.” She picked him up, hugging him close then putting him back into the shower.

If it was a normal night, she would skip the showers and let him just go to bed but she didn’t know if they would be able to bathe again so she had to take every chance she got. It was unfair to Peter, she knew that, yet, she still forced him into the shower.

Once she was done washing his hair and body, she shut the water off and wrapped Peter in a towel, lifting him up to cuddle him. “I’m sorry. I just wanted you to be clean. Mommy’s so sorry. I’m so sorry, Peter.” She sat on the bed with Peter crying on her lap. She was apologizing for everything. For allowing them to become homeless, for losing her job, for marrying an abusive man, for not giving Peter a better life...

A little while later, Pepper was lying in the bed with him. The bed didn’t smell fresh but it didn’t smell dirty either, all she was grateful for was that they actually had a bed to sleep in. The thought of their old apartment being empty right now with all of their furniture was making her upset, it was most likely going to stay empty for a few days, days they could be in there and not on the streets.

She caressed Peter’s young features and silently prayed for a better life for the both of them. “I love you so much. No matter what happens, I want you to know that I love you more than anything.”

Peter was sucking on his thumb but he smiled behind his finger. "I 'ove you 'oo." He said around the digit.

"Try to sleep. We're safe here. Rest your eyes, Petey." Pepper watched Peter fall asleep but she was too worried to fall asleep herself so she stayed awake for awhile longer, worrying and stressing about what they're going to do.

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Pepper got Peter to school early so he could make it for breakfast. She actually had nowhere to go since she wasn't working so she walked back to the motel to shower and try to think about what they were going to do next.

She was starting to regret staying in the motel now because it was Thursday and then Friday and then on the weekend, Peter wasn't going to have anywhere to go during the day and Pepper couldn't exactly drag him around the city.

They had the motel for now and she still hadn't decided if they should spend another night there, it would be another \$60 but \$60 just may be worth it if the other option was living on the streets.

She threw one of the pillows across the room and groaned.

It had been almost three hours that she's been at this for and still *no plan. Zero. Nothing.*

She needed to get out of the room and figure something out. Pepper paid the woman at the front for the night, cringing as she handed over three \$20 bills. That wasn't the life she wanted to have, hell, the life she wanted to have definitely didn't include living in a motel with most likely junkies having sex in the rooms next door.

She just needed to get out and spark an idea. She couldn't get an apartment without a job so that was a start. Job, save, apartment, done. In that order.

So Pepper found herself at the library, creating a resume.

She was lucky enough to apply online for her old job and get it within one interview but she needed a better, more stable job. Also one that worked within her hours.

That was going to be hard.

Pepper carefully placed the resumes into her purse and left, almost slipping down the stairs in the process.

It was snowing out but it wasn't too cold which she was grateful for. It was going to be a rather warm night, warm considering the other freezing nights they had recently so maybe they could spend tonight outside then have the motel all weekend.

The thought made her feel sick to her stomach but she pushed those thoughts away and walked into an office. It was nice. Not like her old one. She approached the front desk. "Good morning. I'm just wondering if you guys are hiring? I have my resume here for you, ready to go." She cringed. She was being too chirpy and it was too fake.

The woman smiled warmly at her. "Oh. What position are you looking for?"

Pepper looked around. She wasn't 100% sure what they even did in that office. She was simply desperate. She looked at the empty office chair beside the woman. "Well," Pepper pulled out her resume and handed one to the lady. "I do have a lot of experience with customer service. I am looking for full time, whatever positions you guys have available."

"Alright then! I'm going to store this on file. Next month the manager looks over all the resumes and calls the people that most stick out. Fingers crossed."

Pepper appreciated her optimism but one month was way too long to wait. She needed a job today.

The next five places she went to didn't have much luck either.

One wasn't hiring, the other took her resume without so much of a word, another was part time, the

next was night time shifts and the last took it with a smile so... fingers crossed.

She was hungry and checked the time on her phone, she still had two hours until she had to pick Peter up but she was going to let him stay in the after school program for an hour or two before she went to get him, wanting him to stay in a warm, clean and happy environment for as long as possible.

Pepper passed by the cafe and saw a sign saying that they were hiring. That got her more excited than the coffee they had so she walked in and walked up to the cashier. "What can I get for you, ma'am?"

"Actually I saw the sign outside that you guys are hiring and I'm just wondering what the pay is?"

The cashier smiled. "Oh. So let me clarify with my manager quickly and I'll get right back to you. Pay is going up and I just want to give you the right answer. One moment."

"Take your time." Pepper stood off to the side to wait but she bumped into someone. "Oh. I'm sorry. Oh." She turned around and saw Tony. "Oh. Tony. Um," Her face heated up.

Oh god, did he just hear that conversation? Does he know I'm looking for a job?

"You step on my shoes before you can even say hello to me. Impressive, gotta say." He gave her a smile that made her feel like she was in high school again with the butterflies she got.

"I'm sorry." She looked down and saw the mud stain on his shoe and couldn't help but laugh. "Actually it was kinda your fault for standing so close to me."

Tony laughed. "My bad. I just wanted to double check it was you. Then after you stepped on me, I got my answer. Clumsy one, I can tell."

Pepper went to speak but the cashier walked back over. "To answer your question, ma'am, the-"

"No no no no." Pepper smiled and waved her off. "It's fine um... I will have a coffee and... a bagel. Toasted. With cream cheese. Thank you."

She quickly shoved the resumes into her purse and pulled out her wallet but Tony stepped beside her. "I got it. Can you add a coffee to that order and... one of those lemon things."

Pepper looked up at him. "You mean lemon biscuit?" She laughed.

He shrugged and the way he did it sent those butterflies back in her belly so she looked away. "Thank you. Again. Again again for paying for my order."

Tony tapped his card and walked around her to wait for the food and coffees. "You're beautiful so any time."

Pepper blushed. Normally she hated when guys hit on her because Ben always found out and he always got mad and usually slapped her for it... or worse.

But now, she was liking it. "Oh. So are you saying if I was ugly then you wouldn't be buying my coffee?" She teased.

Tony laughed. That was a good sign, she thought. "No, I'd just have to overlook that." He took the tray and placed it on the table, pulling the chair out for her.

"Oh. Thank you." She sat down and grabbed one of the coffees, taking a sip without really looking at it.

"So, without sounding like a complete creep, I missed you yesterday."

Pepper thought of the day she had yesterday. Seeing Tony would have made it a lot better but she was also a complete mess. "Is that so?"

Tony watched her take a sip of the coffee and picked up the other one. "Actually, that one is mine."

"Oh! I'm so sorry. I didn't even look." She handed it to him but she already drank out of it so she

didn't expect him to take it. "I um,"

"First you step on my shoes then take my coffee, like I said, you're lucky you're beautiful." He was only joking and Pepper could see that. She was an excellent judge of character after Ben and everything she's been through. *Excellent.*

Tony was a good guy. She could tell. He was genuine and kind. Of course she's only met him a handful of times and knew next to nothing about him but he was a good guy, she saw that in him.

Ben was a good guy from the start but looking back, he had *a lot* of red flags that Pepper ignored and saw right through at the time.

Tony was just... different.

And so their conversation carried on for the next three hours. Time passed by so quickly that both of them had completely lost track of time.

They ordered more drinks and breakfast foods that they munched on and got to know each other.

It wasn't difficult to talk to Tony, he made it very easy to talk to him so Pepper felt bad that she had to lie to him. She felt bad that she couldn't tell him about her life. She didn't even tell him about Peter, she didn't trust him *that* much just yet.

Pepper saw the time and gasped. "Oh! It's late. I hadn't realized we've been talking for so long." She stood up to put her coat on and Tony stood up as well.

"Crap. Did I just make you late for work or something?"

"No. No no, not at all. Um, but I do have to be somewhere."

Tony threw their garbage away and handed Pepper's purse to her. "Okay. I had a really nice time talking to you."

Pepper stopped to thank him. "Me too. I had a really good time so, thank you. Again. For all the food and coffees and teas." She tucked her hair behind her ear. "But I gotta run. I'll see you around?"

It took Tony a bit to get the words out. "Yes. Yeah, yeah."

"Okay." With one last smile, Pepper walked out of the cafe but Tony couldn't leave it at that.

"Wait! Pepper." He pushed open the cafe doors and ran a few feet to catch up with her. "Can I take you on a date sometime? A real date. With real food and... coffee still, if you want it."

Pepper wanted to say yes but she couldn't. Her life was a mess right now. Plus what would she do with Peter. And a date meant dinner and after dinner meant going back to his place for sex and she wasn't close to ready for that again yet. Or he'd want to go back to her place and she didn't even have a place.

She must have been taking too long to answer because Tony started talking again. "I'm moving too fast, aren't I? I'm not Uh, I'm not normally like this. I just, I haven't felt the connection like this with someone in a very long time and I don't want to throw it away--"

"Tony," Pepper took a step towards him. "my life is... crazy right now. Remember how I told you I recently moved here? Well, you figured that out but... my life is super crazy. I want to go on a date with you but, my schedule um, I don't exactly, it's kinda all over the place and I have obligations."

Tony nodded. "I'm not forcing you, I-we can work around your schedule. I'm very flexible. When are you free?"

Pepper couldn't stop the smile from forming on her lips. Okay. She was falling for this man. She was falling and she was going to fall *hard* and she was going to get her heart broken. But she couldn't walk away from him.

"Um, I'm free... Monday. It's kind of a weird time, I know, I'm busy all weekend so Monday works."

Tony smiled as well. "Perfect. So can I pick you up at... let's say seven for dinner? I'll take you

somewhere nice. Not that this cafe isn't nice, I actually love it."

Here it was. She had to tell him evenings didn't work for her. "Actually, I'm busy from three and beyond. I'm free for lunch though. Let's say, eleven?"

"Works for me. Where can I pick you up?"

"Oh. We can just meet at the restaurant. It'll save you from driving." She sounded like an idiot. And she was. Tony wasn't going to go for a poor, homeless, jobless, insane woman.

Tony didn't push it. "Okay. Can we meet here then, and I'll drive the rest of the way to the restaurant?"

Pepper nodded. She was okay with that. "Yes. That works."

"Okay. Then it's a date. Can I get your number?"

After they exchanged numbers, Pepper turned and started walking the other way, feeling like she was on top of the world even though she was about to go back to the motel. That didn't matter right now.

Nothing else did at that moment.

She heard her phone buzz so she pulled it out and saw a text from Tony.

Tony: *Don't fall*

Tony: *Again*

She texted him back and made it to Peter's school before the sun went down and Peter's smiling face made her mood impossibly better.

She decided to spend another night in the motel, she didn't want to end such an amazing day on the streets.

Not yet.

Chapter End Notes

Work and school is so hard to balance. I had a huge breakdown tonight and I'm worried because I've only been doing this for 3 weeks. Also my co worker said something to me that really bugged me.

We were talking about childcare (I work in a daycare) and I said how I'll never send my kids to a daycare and have someone else raise them and she said "ohh yes you will. You'll have to" or something along those lines, it pissed me off. I should have said something because it's my life and that's the plan I want for myself. Just because she couldn't do it doesn't mean I can't.

Then I saw this quote and I really liked it. "If someone says you can't, they're showing you their limits, not yours"

And I really liked that. I have crazy dreams I don't share with anyone (only one or two Internet friends know) because everyone says I'm crazy and tries to talk me out of them so I stop sharing my dreams with people which causes me to shut down and build up all my emotions so I have no one to talk to :/ anyways sorry for that

See you next chapter!

I was born in a thunderstorm

Chapter Notes

It's so exciting to read all of your guys comments. I appreciate them all so much:)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was Sunday night.

Pepper had made the extremely risky decision to stay in the motel for four nights.

She counted and counted their money. Peter went to bed so she would count it again and again, trying to decide if they had enough money to stay there until she got a job and then they had that income but it wasn't going to last.

She had \$961 in bills and \$400 in her bank account that she was not going to touch unless it was an absolute *emergency*.

They weren't there yet. And hopefully they never will be.

They were out of groceries so that meant at least \$70 towards that whenever she decided to go grocery shopping which will most likely be on Tuesday when she had nothing but job hunting planned.

Tomorrow was her date.

She was extremely nervous to say the least. Her and Tony could talk for hours without even being aware of the time passing by between them but she hadn't been on a first date since she was twenty years old and even then, she didn't have a lot of practice with that.

She also didn't have anything nice to wear and she couldn't afford to buy anything, so Pepper put together her own outfit with what she had. A low cut white blouse with black jeans and black high heels, she had to walk to the cafe in high heels and cringed at the thought.

Peter would be at school and she had enough time to get ready before the date and enough time to not rush it before she had to get Peter at three.

Everything was looking up.

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Pepper decided to wear her shoes to walk to the cafe.

It was about a fifteen minute walk from the motel and it was snowing and icy so there was no way she was going to wear her heels there.

As soon as she arrived, she looked around for Tony's car and then walked inside the cafe to switch her shoes for her heels.

She barely had time to get her shoes shoved in her purse when she saw Tony's car pull up and a few moments later, he was getting out. She took a calming breath.

Technically they've been on multiple dates before. Dates in the exact same cafe she was standing in, dates in which they talked for hours so this wasn't any different. She tried to tell herself that over and over again as she walked outside to greet him.

"You look beautiful." Tony placed his hand on her hip and pulled her in for a half, awkward hug.

"Oh." She awkwardly patted him on the back. *Dammit. Was it going to be like this the entire date? Maybe this was a mistake.* "Thank you." He pulled away so she got a look at his outfit. He was wearing a suit that screamed *money*. And suddenly Pepper was feeling extremely uncomfortable, out of place and underdressed. "You look very handsome. Am I too... underdressed?"

"No. Not at all. You look... stunning. And I think you're gonna like the restaurant. Shall we go?"

Pepper accepted his hand to help her into his car and as he walked around to sit in the driver's seat, she looked at him up and down. He was rich. She could see that. Not only because of the suit he was wearing or his car but the way he carried himself with such confidence.

If she could see that he was rich without him having to tell her, maybe it was obvious that she was poor. Was it obvious she was homeless. She showered, blow dried her hair, managed to curl some strands with the brush handle and heat from the blow drier, so she *hoped* she didn't look homeless.

When Tony got into the car, Pepper said something without actually even thinking about it first. "You know, I'm twenty eight years old and I don't even know how to drive."

Tony started the car and looked over at her, no judgement in his stare. "Did you never want to learn or never cared to?"

"Well my..." She briefly hesitated because she was about to say husband but stopped herself. "My dad used to drive me everywhere back at the age where I should have gotten my license and I guess I've been so busy lately so I don't really care to get a licence."

It was partly the truth. She had to bend the truth a bit. She drove all the way from Minnesota to New York perfectly fine with no license. Although that was mostly highways with barely any cars and side streets. New York was extremely difficult and busy.

"I've been driving since I was sixteen. I could teach you, if you'd like. It's actually quite simple with practice."

"I think New York is probably the worst place to learn." She laughed.

"True. But if you learn to drive in New York, you can drive anywhere." Tony typed in the restaurant on the gps once they pulled up to a red light. He actually knew the route off by heart but he thought it would ease some of Pepper's nerves, and it did although she wouldn't ever say it.

The two drifted into normal conversation on the drive there and once they pulled up, Tony got out to walk around and open the door for Pepper but she was getting out herself, not used to such treatment.

Tony stopped. "Oh, I was going to open the door for you but I love an independent woman."

Pepper shut the door behind her. “Oh. Oh, sorry. I um, I’m not used to that, I guess.”

Could she embarrass herself anymore? Maybe she should have told Tony this was basically the second first date of her entire life. Maybe then he would understand or not want to go out with her and it would save her a pain of heartache later because she really liked this man.

They were seated at a circular booth in the far back and the lights in the whole restaurant were dim, adding to the intimacy and romance.

They began talking and then flirting and then they both moved closer to each other and when Tony put his hand on Pepper's cheek, she looked away and tucked her hair behind her ear. “What um, what do you want with me?”

Tony frowned. “What do you mean?”

“I just, I don’t want to lead you on if we don’t want the same things.” They briefly talked about it but now that she was sitting at the restaurant with him, she realized she should have asked him way before the date.

It wasn’t going to work out anyways.

She had too much history that she couldn’t tell anyone. Hell, they were lying about their last name! She couldn’t start a relationship off with one big lie, but she also couldn’t seem to end it.

“I want a relationship with you. I know we’ve only known each other for like two seconds,” He chuckled. “But you have this, sparkle in your eyes. And I like that.”

“Oh really? You like me for my sparkle?” She fluttered her eyes at him.

Tony pushed a strand of hair behind her ear. “You do have a very nice sparkle.”

Pepper genuinely laughed. Tony made her feel like she was capable of greatness. She made her feel

like life could be more than running away from Ben or living in an old motel.

She looked down. It was a lot more than that. “Okay. I need to tell you something.”

Tony pulled away but listened to her. “Anything.”

She sighed. She wasn’t going to start this relationship based on a lie. “So... I have a son.”

Pepper carefully watched his reaction. He slowly nodded at the news and then looked down briefly before looking back up at her. “Are you talking about an actual child or do you have a dog? Or a cat? Because I know some people are really obsessed with their animals and I just wanna know.”

“Um, an actual child. My son.”

A smile broke across Tony’s face. He leaned back and swung an arm over the backrest. “What’s his name?”

“Peter.”

“Peter.” Tony repeated, trying it out for himself. “That’s a cute name.”

Pepper unconsciously moved closer to him. “Yeah, I named him after Peter Pan actually. I was obsessed when I was a little girl and I don’t want him to ever grow up, like Peter Pan.”

“Oh.” Tony chuckled at that information, seeming interested in the fact that Pepper had a child. “How old is he?”

“He’s eight. He just turned eight.”

Tony tilted his head and Pepper’s heart dropped. *No.* “Wait. You’re twenty eight and he’s eight, now I’m very good at math so correct me if I’m wrong but you had him when you were twenty?”

“Yeah. I was a young mom.”

“Yeah,” Tony looked like he was deep in thought. “You guys grew up together practically.” Pepper nodded and pretended to fix the straps on her dress. “Can I ask about his father?”

“Oh.” Pepper suddenly forgot their lie for a split second. “Um, he died in a car accident when Peter was two. It’s been a long time and we weren’t married or anything. Just raising a kid together.”

Tony nodded. “I’m sorry for your loss.”

Pepper laughed. Then she tried to cover it up by taking a sip of her wine and she laughed harder because the guy they were talking about used to beat her almost everyday and emotionally abuse her as well. It was more like good riddance although she couldn’t tell Tony that.

“You probably think I’m some kind of psycho laughing about my son's dead father.” She composed herself and took a breath. She wished Ben was dead but of course she wasn’t going to get that lucky there.

She made a free break from him and she hadn’t seen or heard from him in over three months, things were good right now.

Tony laughed with her, to her surprise. “No, I don’t think you’re psycho. I’m thinking you moved on from him and that’s a good thing. So you can laugh all you want.”

Pepper appreciated that although just because she hasn’t been on many dates, does not mean that she doesn’t know that it’s rude and awkward to bring up past exes. “No. I want to talk about us.”

“Okay. I like the sounds of that.”

Overall, their date went amazing.

It actually went way better than Pepper thought it would go. They talked, laughed, had dessert and had time to have coffee after which was more than Pepper expected. She knew Tony was going to take care of the bill, he asked her on the date, but when the waiter brought it over, her heart

skipped a beat before he grabbed it.

There were no prices on the menu which meant it was extremely expensive and she knew there was no way in hell she would have been able to afford that.

They walked out hand in hand but now the date was over and she had to go back to reality.

A part of her was feeling really guilty for getting to eat such a nice meal in a beautiful restaurant when all Peter was going to get tonight was going to be a peanut butter sandwich, again, or some already made KD that she was going to heat up for them.

It wasn't fair.

But she couldn't exactly ask Tony if she could bring Peter on their first date together. It would end before it even started.

She was glad that she told Tony about Peter.

It was going to make things a lot easier down the road and the fact that she didn't have to lie about that extremely important aspect of her life was a huge relief.

Once they got into the car, Tony looked over at her. "So, it's not exactly dinner and the night isn't over but I know you have to be somewhere at three, I'm guessing it's to pick Peter up?"

Pepper turned to him. Her brain was wired to think someone was mad at her if they used any other tone than sounding happy. "Yeah. Are you mad I didn't tell you before? I probably should have."

"What? No. Absolutely not. I'm not mad. Of course I'd like it if you told me before but it doesn't change how I feel about you and I love kids, so, I'd love to meet Peter when you're ready for me to meet him."

That felt nice to hear, Pepper thought.

“Um, well, he’s eight but don’t let that fool you, he’s extremely clever and so smart. You know, last year his school actually contacted me and asked if I’d want to move him up a grade because they were worried he wasn’t going to get the right education if he stayed where he was?”

“Did you let him skip a grade?”

“No, I don’t want to let it get to his head.” She joked. Ben wasn’t on board with the idea, not liking the idea of Peter being with older kids. Pepper understood that to some extent.

Tony chuckled. “You know, I’m something of a genius myself. I skipped grade six and went straight to grade seven then I skipped the last three years of high school and went to college at fifteen. Definitely don’t recommend sending Peter to college at fifteen.”

That was news to Pepper. “Oh, really. I’m just trying to get past the fact that you’re a genius.”

They continued talking until they were about three blocks away from the cafe. “Oh so, I don’t actually know where you live? Where would you want me to drop you off?”

Pepper checked the time. It was already 2:30pm. Peter had thirty minutes left of school and Pepper’s first time where she was going to be picking him up right as the bell rang.

She couldn’t wait to see the look on his face. “Oh. The cafe. Peter’s school finishes at three so I’ll be able to kill some time there.”

Tony wanted to suggest driving her there and waiting with her but he didn’t, not wanting to scare her away. So he parked his car in the same spot he picked her up and looked over. He wasn’t going to make another move, not after she turned him away in the restaurant.

“So,” Tony said, pondering over what he wanted to say.

“I had a really good time. Thank you for... everything.” She really liked Tony and they did have an amazing time. She wanted to ask him out but if she asked, she had to pay, she was pretty sure so she stayed in his car and looked over at him.

She felt like a cheapskate. Waiting for Tony to ask her out again just so she didn't have to pay, but she had a good reason for it.

"I did too. Would you want to go out again? Maybe this Friday. We can go for dinner." Tony suggested.

"Um," She thought of Peter. And it was going to be hard to get ready for a date with no fresh running water or access to *anything*. They couldn't afford to live in the motel anymore, meaning last night was their last night.

"I really want to but I don't have any childcare for Peter so-

"He can come."

"What?"

"I'd love to meet him. And I really like you and he's your son, he's a big part of your life that I want to be a part of too." Tony reached his hand up to cup Pepper's cheek.

It was an intense stare, Pepper had to admit. Although she didn't feel like Tony was forcing her to do anything, she felt like she was in complete control of her decision. "Okay, let me think about it. I haven't even told Peter about you yet."

Tony pulled away but he wasn't upset. "Just tell him another genius wants to meet him."

Pepper belly laughed and then shortly after they said their goodbyes and Pepper began walking towards Peter's school.

Now that they had to find somewhere else to sleep at night, things had gotten significantly harder. The motel was good. It was safe. They had a warm bed to sleep in at night, a roof over their heads, a door that locked them away from the outside world, running water and a place to keep all their stuff.

After tonight, they wouldn't have any of that anymore.

She paid the motel for last night and if they left before 12am today, they wouldn't have to pay for another night so Pepper was planning on leaving at 11:59pm tonight and then finding somewhere for her and Peter to sleep.

It didn't help knowing that the motel room was going to remain empty tonight while they froze on the streets.

Pepper didn't want to think about that right now. The only thing that got her through this time in their life was to remain positive about every situation even when it seemed like there was nothing to be positive about. But she had an amazing day with Tony, she was going to see her son now and things were good for the time being.

When she spotted Peter running out of the doors and into her arms, all the worries disappeared from her mind.

"Mommy! I missed you!"

She lifted Peter into her arms and spun him around. "Hi, baby. Did you have a good day at school today?"

"Uh huh." Peter was placed on his feet so he took his backpack off and opened it up. "I made you a picture." He held it up for Pepper to see.

"Oh. I love it. Is that you and me?" Pepper could make out two people, one was towering over the other but then she spotted a random figure that looked like he was hanging onto a black cloud. "Who's this?"

"That's me, that's you," He pointed to the happy figures. "And that's daddy getting dead in the back and going away from us."

That took Pepper by surprise. Maybe it wasn't the best idea for her to tell Peter to tell everyone that his father was dead. But she didn't know what else to do. "Wow. I really like how you drew us but this figure is a little dark, don't you think?"

Peter took the drawing and looked at it. “Like I should have drawed him red and yellow?”

“Well... maybe it can just be us in the drawing.” She suggested then took the paper from Peter and placed it in his backpack.

“Can I draw when we get home?” He asked. Peter used to draw almost every single day once he got home from school and had unlimited supplies but they didn’t have access to that anymore. They had no paper and besides for some broken crayons, they didn’t have anything.

“Let’s see what we can find at home.”

“Okay.” Peter grabbed onto his mom's hand. “But not home. The motel, right?”

“Yes, Peter.”

Peter didn’t say anything else. He swung his hand along with Peppers and then remembered something. “Oh! My friend gave me a package of cookies today and I saved them so we can share them tonight!”

Normally that would have made Pepper so proud, knowing she was raising such a generous boy but she knew why Peter was doing it now.

“That’s so sweet, honey, but you eat it. They’re your cookies. You enjoy.”

Peter frowned. He saw his mom looking at their limited food supply last night. He was sick of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for dinner or heated up KD. He missed his mom’s home cooked meals but he tried not to complain about it.

He just wanted them to eat a treat for once.

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Tony was getting caught up on some work that he missed because of his date today, not that he was complaining, when the phone rang.

He answered it after checking the caller ID. "This is Stark."

"Stark, this is Ben Parker. Last week when we met up, you asked for more information on my family. I want to find them and I believe you can help me."

Tony opened up Ben's file. "Alright. Can I have their names, pictures, anything else you can give me on them and I'll start tonight."

"Thank you. I'm sending over a picture of them."

Tony nodded and waited for it to come through. "Alright. And their names?"

"I'll forward that over to you right now."

"Alright. I'll give you a call when I find something on them. Have a good night, Mr. Parker." Tony hung up the phone and stood up to fill up another cup of coffee. He was ready to give up on this guy and his stubborn self so he was glad he finally had something to work on.

His computer dinged with a new notification so Tony walked around his desk and sat down, opening up the file.

His blood ran cold at the faces staring back at him.

The same woman who he went on a date with today.

The same woman who he couldn't get out of his head since he met her.

Pepper.

He clicked on the next image.

It was of a little boy. He looked around the same age Pepper said he was. He had chocolate brown, curly hair, big brown eyes and pale, childish looking features.

He had two missing front teeth and although Tony had never met or seen a picture of Peter before, he knew it was Pepper's son.

The third picture was of the two of them.

Pepper was holding Peter on her hip and the two were grinning into the camera.

They looked so happy although there was something seriously wrong.

Things were not adding up.

Chapter End Notes

What do you guys think?

The demons that fill you with fear

Chapter Notes

I know I haven't gotten a chance to respond to all of your comments yet, I will this weekend, I just want to say that I read every single comment and I am so soooo grateful for every single comment

EDIT: so I just posted and I can see that words I put in italics aren't in italics, I'm not sure why it's doing that. I've been doing exactly what I've always done. That's so frustrating.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tony was trying to make sense of it all.

Pepper told him Peter's father died in a car accident when he was two but here Ben was, alive and well and looking for them. Although what if Ben was Peter's step father who she married, maybe they weren't even married, Tony didn't know the truth.

He looked at the names below.

Pepper Parker

Peter Parker

Tony was told her name was Pepper Moore and of course he believed her because why wouldn't he.

He ran his hands through his hair and groaned. What was the truth? Why was Ben looking for them?

Nothing was adding up.

Tony had been on a lot of different cases before, some weird ones, some tough ones, but this was by far the most difficult case.

Now that he thought about it, things did make sense now. Starting with the fact that Pepper was so secretive and not wanting him to pick her up at her house or drop her off. He had only met with her at the cafe and the restaurant, never anywhere else.

He assumed before it was because she was worried about her safety but now he knew why; Pepper was afraid that he would find out her secret.

He had to give it to her, she was pretty good at lying. But just how long had she been lying like this for?

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Pepper finished giving Peter a shower.

He still hated them more than anything but it had gotten a bit easier since the first shower she had to force him to take.

While Peter lay on the bed and air dried, Pepper went into a quick shower herself. She had no idea when the next one was going to be.

She walked out of the bathroom with her hair wrapped in the towel and started laying all the clothes on the bed. They had to get them washed but she had no idea where. They couldn't afford that right now so they would have to make due until they had an opportunity to get their clothes washed.

“What’re you doing, mommy?” Peter crawled over to see what she was doing.

“Remember we talked about this last night, baby? Last night was our last night here.”

“Oh.” Peter sat back on his knees. He thought about something for a bit then tilted his head. “Well,

where will we go?"

Pepper didn't know yet. She wanted to find a place before it got dark. She wanted to walk to a safer part of the city but it was too far for that and too cold. "We'll find something." She forced a smile on her face so as to not scare Peter or worry him, then she began packing some clothes into their duffel bag.

Peter grabbed his blanket and laid back down, half watching her and half watching the only channel they got on the half broken tv which was a video recording of a fish tank.

Pepper was trying to go over everything in her head. She had to put their stuff somewhere during the day and she couldn't exactly ask for a job carrying everything she owns on her back. She had to look presentable.

They had been lucky with this motel for the past six nights but it wasn't an option anymore. She had to buy groceries tomorrow and that was going to require money and food was more of a priority than shelter.

She looked at Peter on the bed and started second guessing herself.

It was absolutely freezing out but she was running low on money.

They would have to buy a tent. It was going to be difficult but if she set it up properly, they could make it work. She was going to have to make it work.

So Pepper and Peter left the motel just before it got dark and walked to Walmart two blocks away from them. The whole walk there, Pepper was trying to look for a place they could set up camp for the night but it wasn't looking good. They had two options; setting up camp right behind the motel where half the area was fenced off and hoping no one saw them but it was somewhat safer, or, going down to the park in the forest and setting up camp there. Where no one would see them but it was slightly dangerous and risky.

She didn't want to risk anyone calling the police on her and risk anyone taking Peter so when they arrived at Walmart and picked out the tent, Pepper walked into the outdoor aisle and grabbed a knife.

It was small and folded into itself but it was something.

She was going to be sleeping outside with her eight year old son with a bunch of creeps around. She wasn't taking any chances.

Peter was sitting in the shopping cart at the top seat so when Pepper threw the knife into the cart, he tried to look back and see it. "What's that, mommy? Can I see?"

"It's a knife and it's only for mommy to touch, okay?"

Peter still tried to see it. "Okay. But why do you need a knife?"

She opened her mouth to lie to him but decided not to. She looked around to make sure no one was looking at them. "Because, since we have to sleep in a tent for a little bit now, it's just something for our safety. It's okay."

Peter nodded. He didn't want to think about it so he pointed towards the toy aisle. "Can we go look? Please."

"We don't have enough money for any toys right now, Peter. I'm sorry."

Peter groaned. "I just wanna look. I just miss all my toys too."

That hurt to hear. They left in such a rush so Peter couldn't grab any of his toys. He got a few since they've lived in New York but it wasn't the same. He still appreciated them either way... he just wanted more.

"How about you get to pick out one colouring book and one pack of markers?"

Peter gasped as if Pepper just agreed to give him the world.

"Really?! Yes yes yes!" He lifted his arms up. "Can you lift me up? I want to be able to walk and see everything better."

Once Pepper pushed the cart into that aisle, she lifted Peter out of the shopping cart seat, accidentally causing his shoes to fall off. She hated when that would happen but it seemed like Peter was growing overnight so it was definitely time to stop sitting him in there but she did anyways.

Peter began looking at all the colouring books.

As Pepper watched him, she had a huge smile on her face, knowing Peter's happiness was worth all the money she had in her bank account and more.

He had been so good about their... situation and didn't complain, he put up with everything so she knew he deserved this.

She just wished she could have given him more.

Once they got back to the motel and ate dinner, Pepper checked the time. It was 7:34pm. She wanted to spend as much time in the motel before going outside in the cold so they still had a few hours inside, before having to leave.

Peter was colouring in his new colouring books while Pepper got everything packed away and ready to take with them. She looked over at Peter colouring contently with his little tongue sticking out in concentration.

Little did he know what was in store for them tonight and for who knew how long.

Pepper wasn't even sure what the next few nights and days would bring.

It was supposed to be getting colder out. The tent was only going to protect them from the wind but not the cold.

She sat down and pulled out the makeup bag with all their money as well as the receipt from today. The tent was \$99, the blow up mattress was \$40, the pump was \$8, an extra heated blanket was \$35, Peter's colouring book was \$4 and his markers were \$2. That left them with \$455 in bills and \$400 in the bank and she still had no job, no income, no house. Nothing.

She locked all her money away and laid down on the bed with Peter, wanting to enjoy these last new moments with him in a warm room before they had to leave into the cold outside.

11:30pm came all too soon.

Peter had been asleep since eight but Pepper couldn't sleep.

She didn't want to go.

It was so warm and safe there but they couldn't stay. It was simply too expensive and they needed the money for food over the next who knows how long.

Pepper turned the small lamp on in the corner and pulled Peter towards the edge of the bed to get him dressed in a second layer of pants, sweaters, and then his winter jacket on top of that all while he stayed asleep with his thumb tucked safely in his mouth that she had to remove briefly and put back.

Next was her.

She put on two layers of everything then placed their duffel bag on the bed, Peter's backpack and the tent.

How am I going to do this?

Pepper lifted Peter up first, awkwardly holding him in her arms then she swung the duffel bag over her shoulder along with Peter's backpack then she grabbed the tent with her other arm and walked out.

She shut the door and held in her tears until she dropped the key off at the front desk.

"Leaving so soon?" The lady asked.

Pepper forced a smile. She was so tired of having to do that. “Yeah, my sister’s in town so we’re going to go stay at her place for a little while.” She lied but wished it was the truth.

“Would you like me to call you a cab?”

“No thanks. It’s just one block away.” As soon as she stepped outside, she silently released a sob.

They were homeless and it just hit her.

They no longer had an apartment or a motel or a roof over their heads. How did this happen? How did she let this happen? She was a single mom with a young son, walking in the streets at midnight in the middle of November.

And no place to go.

She had no friends here. She debated calling Tony and asking if she could stay at his house for a bit but she knew he would run if he knew the truth. No one wanted a weak, homeless woman.

That’s how she saw herself now. She was weak. She couldn’t stop Ben and now Peter was suffering because of it.

Pepper hoisted Peter up higher. Peter weighed about 50 pounds but with all the extra added weight, it felt like she was carrying close to 90 pounds in total.

She crossed the street and began walking the next block towards the park with the open field and forest but Peter was getting too hard to carry so he began waking up. “Mm?”

“I didn’t mean to wake you.”

Peter shivered and looked around. “Mommy? Why’re outside? Cold.”

Pepper pushed through the tears that were freezing on her face. “I’m sorry. We can’t stay at the motel anymore so we’re going to go camping for a few nights.”

Peter looked around and shivered again. "But... you're only supposed to go camping in the summer. It's too cold. Mommy."

"I know." Pepper placed the tent on the ground and kneeled down, placing Peter on his feet. The light post above them made it bright enough so that when they spoke, the warm air turned to mist. It was cold out.

"But remember I told you." She pulled Peter's jacket tighter on him. "It's just for a bit. Then we'll go back to the motel or-or somewhere else."

Peter whimpered and looked around. "I'm cold."

"I know. Just a few more steps and then I'll set the tent up. Can you walk now and carry your backpack for me?"

Peter took it without a word and followed his mom down the sidewalk and then into a dark field. He looked around but he couldn't see anything ahead of them, only the city lights behind them. "Mommy! I'm scared. I want you to carry me."

Pepper took his head. She was scared too. "We're almost there. We'll be warm soon."

She decided to set the tent up just next to the forest so at least they had some sort of cover. There was a big tree beside them too so she hoped that helped provide them with some protection against nature and humans. Humans were what she was most afraid of.

Pepper placed everything on the ground and tried to walk around to make sure the ground was flat, tossing away sticks and rocks, then she pulled out the tent and laid down the bottom layer. "Come stand in this so it doesn't blow away."

Peter walked over without saying a word.

Even though Pepper read over the instructions in the hotel so she would have some idea what to do once it came to this moment, it was still incredibly hard to put up.

There was no light so she had Peter hold her phone but he kept moving and she tried not to snap at him.

The wind was picking up as well which made it ten times harder.

But setting up a tent in the dark, freezing cold, and with an eight year old as your helper wasn't the best way to do it, but it was the only way.

Her hands were so cold that they felt numb so it was next to impossible to blow up the mattress with the pump once the tent was up and they were inside.

Peter sat on the floor.

He barely said a word and Pepper knew it was because he was tired. Every kid his age should be sleeping warmly in their beds, not having to help their mom set up camp for the night because they didn't have anywhere else to go.

Peter wiped at his running nose. "Can I go to sleep now, mommy?"

Pepper was about half way through pumping up the mattress. "Um, I'm almost done, baby. Give me another ten minutes."

More than ten minutes later, Pepper was done. She tossed all the blankets onto the bed and helped Peter strip down to his pyjamas then she did the same, got into bed and held Peter close.

Peter turned to tuck his face into her chest. "I miss the motel."

Pepper held him tighter. "Me too."

"Then let's go back. I don't like it out here. It's-it's dark. And scary. And I don't want a bear to come and eat us."

Despite the situation, Pepper laughed. “Oh, baby. There’s no bears in New York.”

“Still.” Peter mumbled.

She continued to hold him for the next few minutes, waiting until he fell asleep so she could but the wind was howling outside and shaking their tent, causing Peter to whimper and move impossibly closer.

“I’m scared!”

“Shh shh. I’m here. You’re safe.” She tried to think about something she could do to make him feel better and then she thought of something. “Can I tell you something?”

Peter pulled away a bit to look at her, even though he couldn’t see anything with how dark it was.

“Well, a few days ago I met this guy. His name is Tony. We met on the streets when I slipped on ice. Then we met again in a cafe and we talked and laughed for hours. Then, I saw him a few days later, and we talked again. And today, he took me on a date to this beautiful restaurant.”

Peter was holding onto her shirt tightly, not wanting her to disappear as he listened to the story.

“Was he nice?”

“Very nice. He’s also really funny too, I think you would like him.”

A small smile tugged on his lips. “Yeah?”

“Yeah. And he’s super smart too. Claims he’s a genius. And he wants to meet you. Just to see how smart you really are, I told him you’re the smartest eight year old ever.”

Peter smiled harder. “Well... am I gonna meet him?”

“Do you want to?” That was all up to Peter, Pepper wasn’t going to force him to meet Tony if he didn’t feel comfortable around another adult male. Pepper knew Peter got nervous around them.

“Ummm,” Even though Pepper couldn’t see Peter’s face, she knew what he looked like as he thought about the question. “He’s nice?”

“Yes, he is.”

“Oh. Does he hit you too?”

The question took Pepper by surprise. “N-no. No, Peter. Daddy was... he’s not going to hurt me anymore. He’s not going to hurt us ever again.”

Peter nodded. “Okay. Then I guess I’ll meet Tony. If he’s nice. But I don’t want to meet him if he’s rude.”

Pepper smiled but she was still thinking about what Peter said. “Okay. Maybe he can pick you up from school with me on Friday then. Would you like that? So you guys can meet.”

Peter yawned and shrugged. “I don’t know yet. I’m tired. I wanna go back to sleep.”

She didn’t want to push it anymore so she pressed a kiss to Peter’s forehead and let him tuck himself against her. “I love you. Sleep good, baby.” Peter tucked his thumb back into his mouth and Pepper held him impossibly closer, the knife was next to her and she wasn’t afraid to use it.

Even after Peter somehow managed to fall asleep, Pepper couldn’t.

She was worried about what the next day would bring and then the next night. It was a never ending loop of stressing and worrying.

She just kept counting down the hours until morning.

Work is exhausting me but I love it! I'm so grateful that I go to a job that I love everyday:)

It's just you and me

Chapter Notes

I'm sick so I hope I edited this chapter properly but I cant think straight anyways but hope you all enjoy it:)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Pepper barely slept last night.

She kept waking up every hour to check the time on her dying phone and making sure they weren't going to be late for school or up before the sun came up.

The thought of someone trying to get into their tent was terrifying and had her holding the knife in one hand throughout the entire night.

When morning came around, Pepper woke up with a sharp pain in her neck and even more tired than when she went to sleep.

She grabbed her phone. It was at 11% so she was going to have to go somewhere today to charge it and hopefully get out of the cold for a few hours.

Pepper opened up their duffel bag and pulled out their half full jug of milk and some corn flakes then tried to figure out how she was going to pour it into a bowl and wash it after.

She also really needed to pee and the thought of having to squat down next to a tree was humiliating. Maybe she wasn't going to have any other choices though.

Peter was shivering in his sleep and Pepper decided to wake him up. "Good morning, Peter. It's time to wake up and get ready for school."

Peter moaned and pulled the blankets tighter around his body. "Mommy. Cold."

"I know. Let's get dressed in warmer clothes." There was a cold breeze coming through the thin walls of the tent that made Pepper wonder if she would ever get rid of the chills in her bones it caused.

Peter whimpered. "I don't like it here. I wanna go back." Peter turned over in the bed to look at Pepper. His nose was red and rosy along with his cheeks. "I wanna go back."

Pepper tried to hold in her tears at that statement. They had no money left. They needed a permanent solution and this tent was the best thing they got. "One day, we're gonna live in a beautiful house with the best heater there is. We're gonna have our own bedrooms and you're gonna have your own separate room alone for your toys. But it's not going to be tomorrow, or next week."

"Then when will it be?" Peter asked as Pepper lifted him up and sat him on the edge of the bed, placing the bowl of cereal in his lap. It wasn't much but it was all they had.

"I'm not sure, Petey. I hope soon." She forced a smile even though she felt like she was dying on the inside.

Peter thought about what she said as he took a few, slow bites. "But I don't wanna have my own room. I want us to share a room."

It never really crossed Pepper's mind that Peter had separation anxiety from her. He had it back when they were living with Ben. Whenever Pepper went out with her friends on those extremely rare occasions or when Ben would take Peter to the park without her, Peter always made it a big deal and sometimes threw a temper tantrum, preventing Pepper from leaving him.

She always thought it was because of the way Ben was but now that Ben wasn't there anymore, Peter still latched onto Pepper and made a big deal when she wasn't around.

That was something Pepper was going to have to work on with him but not right now.

"How about we focus on getting ready for the day. Do you need to pee?"

Peter shrugged as he looked around and then nodded. "Uh huh."

“Okay...” She tried to think of another option but there wasn’t one. “Put your boots on and we’re going to go quickly outside by the tree then come right back in here.”

“No. It’s cold and scary out there.”

Pepper was already opening up the tent door and grabbing Peter’s boots for him. “I’ll be there the whole time. Let’s be super quick.”

Peter whined loudly once they stepped outside. The cold air went straight through him, making him want to cry. He was pushed over to the tree so he reluctantly pulled himself out and did his business as quickly as he could, pulling his pants back up and jumping into the tent that wasn’t any warmer than being outside but it definitely blocked the wind which helped somewhat.

It was a pain in the ass getting Peter dressed for school. He kept wanting to stay under the heated blanket and refused to get ready which made Pepper have to do all the work. She was tired and miserable and her mom guilt was at an all time high but she tried not to snap at Peter and put on a brave face because Peter was trying to be a champ about the situation. It was just extremely difficult on them.

Peter leaned against the tree while Pepper folded the tent away. It was extremely time consuming and annoying so she didn’t want to do this tonight.

Although they were going to have to. And for the foreseeable future as well.

Peter was silent on the walk to school.

He usually chatted away nonstop about what he was excited about but not today. He remained quiet and even when Pepper dropped him off, he still barely spoke a word to her.

It was difficult to leave him so miserable. She wished she could be better for him. She wished so badly she could be better but tonight was going to be the exact same as last night. She didn’t know how much longer both of them could take it.

Pepper found herself walking to the library. It was open early for the University a block away to

study at and it had heating and running water so Pepper walked into the library and went straight for the bathrooms, checking under all the stalls to make sure she was alone and then she locked the door and sighed.

She turned to look in the mirror and began crying.

She looked like an absolute *mess*.

She actually looked homeless.

Her hair was a knotted mess, sticking up in every direction. Her face looked tired and pale and like she hadn't slept in months. Her clothes were dirty and old looking and she smelt.

So the first thing Pepper did was open up the duffel bag and grab her makeup bag, pulling out her toothbrush and toothpaste to finally brush her teeth.

She was getting herself ready in a library bathroom. Everyday she didn't think it could get any worse but it did.

Once she got herself somewhat sorted out, she got the breakfast bowl washed and took the picture out of the plastic slot on the tent, trying to make it look *not* like she was carrying around a tent.

She then walked out of the bathroom but a woman was standing there, seeming to have been waiting for her to unlock it. Pepper acted confused. "Oh. I must have accidentally hit the lock on the door."

Yikes. Pepper walked over to a computer in the far corner and plugged her phone in to charge then began looking for jobs and places to stay the night that were cheap... or free. Although all the free options were halfway houses with drug addicts and there was no way she was going to bring Peter there.

Pepper was about to go find something to eat when her phone rang. She thought it was Peter's school at first but it was a number she didn't recognize. "Hello?"

“Hello. Is this Pepper Moore?”

“Yes. Yes, this is she.” Her heart was racing.

“This is Rachel calling from the bank on fifth street. You dropped your resume off with us last week and we are wondering if you would like to come in for an interview tomorrow?”

Pepper stood up. She was smiling *so hard*. “Yes. I’m available tomorrow.”

“Perfect. What time works best for you?”

Pepper automatically went to reach for her schedule but she didn’t have one so she quickly thought about the best time. “Does 11am work for you?”

“Yes. I’m going to schedule you in for tomorrow November 10th at 11am. I look forward to meeting with you, Ms. Moore.”

“Thank you so much, Rachel. I look forward to meeting with you as well.” Pepper waited until she hung up the phone and couldn’t stop herself from jumping in excitement. She had a job interview. She actually had a job interview. *Finally*.

If she got this job, they could go back to the motel and spend some time there while she saved up to buy an apartment. Things were starting to look up.

Pepper was so grateful for that.

She left her stuff at the computer desk while she went to go find something to eat but her phone rang again. This time it was Tony. She would have smiled at seeing his name if she wasn’t already smiling from getting the job interview.

“Hey.”

“Hey. What are you up to?”

Pepper walked down the hallway to find some vending machines. “I’m just at the library right now.”

“The library? What’re you doing there?”

Pepper could hear the slight tease in his voice. “Nothing interesting. I’m just trying to find a book Peter’s been asking about.” She lied. It scared her how quickly she was with these lies.

“Can I come meet you there?”

“Uh, sure. If you want.” She was starting to panic a bit. Tony was going to see her duffle bag and her freaking tent. “Aren’t you busy working today?”

“No, I’m pretty much done for the day and I want to see you. I’ll be there in about ten minutes.” Tony hung up the phone before Pepper could say anything else.

Little did Pepper know that Tony was meeting up with her but he was still working.

She left the vending machines and walked over to her stuff by the computer. It was in the far back and there weren’t many people around but she didn’t want Tony to see her with it.

He also seemed different on the phone. It made the anxiety race inside her.

Was she overthinking it because of Ben and what she dealt with or was there an actual reason she was thinking this. Her phone buzzed and a text from Tony popped up.

Tony: *I’m here. Wanna meet me at the front?*

Reluctantly, Pepper grabbed her purse and left the tent and duffle bag behind. No one would take it. She would hang out with Tony for a few minutes then he would leave and she would go back to apartment hunting.

Pepper walked down the marble steps and spotted him although he was already looking at her. “Hey. You look beautiful.” Tony pulled her in for a hug and pulled away, staring at her face a little bit longer than what seemed normal.

“What?” Pepper laughed, awkwardly.

“Nothing. I’m just looking at you. Let’s go find this book.” Tony grabbed her hand and started leading her back up the steps and towards the kids section while Pepper followed, amazed at this man.

“You *want* to help me find the book?” She couldn’t believe this. He was actually taking time out of his busy life to help her find a book for her son.

Tony looked back at her. “Yeah. We gotta find that book for him. What’s it called?”

Pepper had a hard time thinking of a book title now. She was falling in love with this man and she barely knew him. She knew she should run but she couldn’t bring herself to do it. “Um... Goodnight moon.”

“Oh. That’s a classic. How long has that book even been around for? I swear my mom used to read it to me when I was Peter’s age.” Tony let go of Pepper’s hand and looked for the G section.

“Same here. Are you close with your parents?”

“My parents died when I was twenty one.”

“I’m so sorry, Tony. Wow.” She placed her hands over her heart. That was awful to hear.

Tony didn’t seem too phased by it. “Yeah. I was never really close with them anyways. Their expectations were too high of me and I always let them down.”

Pepper listened to him. It made her think of her relationship with her parents. “How did they die?”

“A car accident. They were driving to the airport on Christmas Eve and hit some black ice.” Tony explained nonchalantly.

It made Pepper feel *awful* because here she was making up a lie about how Peter’s dad died in a car accident yet Tony’s parents actually died in a car accident.

“Oh gosh. And on Christmas Eve too. Christmas must be a really hard time for you then.”

Tony shrugged. It kinda reminded Pepper of the way Peter shrugs when he wants to avoid a question.

“Yeah. So tell me about your parents? They didn’t die on Christmas Eve too, did they?” He chuckled.

“No. No, definitely not. Um, my parents got divorced when I was ten. My sister chose my dad’s side and I chose my mom’s side. I don’t talk to my dad or sister anymore, at least I haven’t for a while. And I’m not that close with my mom anymore either. I kinda pushed her away when Peter was around five,” It was more like Ben started becoming violent and abusive and pushed everyone she ever loved away so she only had him. It worked. He won. As always.

She looked at Tony and face palmed. “Oh gosh. I’m rambling. I’m sorry.”

Tony was listening the whole time. He reached out to grab her hand, squeezing it and grounding her. “No. Don’t apologize. I like to listen to you ramble so ramble all you want.”

Pepper smiled shyly. “Alright well, I’m done. And I’m not even helping you find this book-”

Tony held it up. “I found it like two minutes ago. I just wanted to listen to you talk.”

“Thank you.” She took it from him. She was actually going to check it out because it would be a lovely surprise for Peter and she could read it to him tonight and distract him from the fact that they were sleeping in a tent.

It was her turn to grab Tony’s hand now. “Did you eat yet? How about we go grab a late breakfast

somewhere.”

Pepper was starving and at the mention of free food, she nodded before she could say no. “Yeah. Maybe to the cafe?”

“How about I take you somewhere else?”

“Okay.” Pepper let go of his hand to dig in her purse for her library card. It was from her old library so she hoped it worked here. She accidentally dropped Peter’s stuffed bunny on the ground that Tony reached down to pick up.

“I’m guessing this is Peter’s.” Tony handed it to her.

“Actually it’s mine.” She shoved it in her purse and laughed. “I’m totally kidding. It’s Peter’s.” Now it was Tony’s turn to laugh.

The lady at the desk scanned her card and frowned. “Oh. It looks like this card is from Minnesota. I’m sorry but I can’t accept it unless it’s in New York.”

Pepper’s heart dropped. Tony was standing right behind her. She told him she was from Ohio. Now this lady was exposing her and Tony was going to know. She turned around to half look at Tony. “Oh, must be um, can I get a library card now then?”

“Of course. Can I get your number?”

Once everything was fixed, Pepper tossed her old card into the garbage and couldn’t look Tony in the eye as they walked out. She didn’t know if she should bring it up or not but he definitely heard it.

As they walked outside, she looked back at the library and how their whole life was still in there, all their clothes, their *home*. Everything. And she was leaving it behind just so Tony didn’t see and figure it out.

When they got into the car, Tony started it and turned to look at Pepper. “I thought you were from

Ohio?”

She swallowed. “What?”

“That woman said your card was from Minnesota.” Tony clarified.

Pepper tried to think of a quick lie. “Oh, I was from Minnesota. Peter and I moved to Ohio and lived there for a few months before coming here.”

Tony slowly nodded. “Why didn’t you stay in Ohio?”

“I don’t know. It just never felt like home.”

“Oh. And New York feels like home?”

“Yes.” That wasn’t a lie. When they ran away from Ben over three months ago, they drove into New York and Pepper knew that’s where they were meant to be. “I love it here.” Despite the fact that they were currently homeless.

Tony was happy about that, not wanting Pepper to get up and leave again but he had his suspicions about her.

Last night he found out she was the woman one of his clients were trying to find but due to the fact that Ben was extremely sketchy and withholding information right from the very beginning led Tony to believe that there was more to the story than he knew.

Of course if a woman takes her child and leaves the state without her husband then that gives some suspicion of an abusive relationship.

Tony wasn’t going to call the police and have them arrest Ben on a little suspicion so he wanted more evidence.

It wasn’t good that he was getting involved with Pepper though, she deserved to know the truth

about him and about Ben looking for her *through him*.

And he will tell her, today wasn't the right time though.

The two of them changed the topic of conversation and continued talking well into their late lunch date.

They were having a really good time even though they hadn't gotten any of the food yet so when Pepper's phone rang and she saw that it was Peter's school calling, she had to answer it. "Oh. I'm so sorry. I have to answer this." She held the phone up to her ear. "Hello?"

"Hello, this is Emily calling on behalf of Peter. He doesn't seem to be having a very good day today and he keeps insists that you come to pick him up."

Pepper checked the time. It was almost noon. "Is he crying?"

"He's very upset. He doesn't want to tell us what's wrong."

Pepper sighed. "Okay. Tell him I'm coming to pick him up." She hung up the phone and looked at Tony. "I'm so sorry but I have to go pick Peter up from school."

Tony pulled his wallet out and placed \$100 on the table. Pepper paused to look at it, thinking about how easily he placed that bill there without a care in the world. "What?" Tony said since she was staring at the money.

She shook her head and got her jacket on. "Nothing. Just..."

"I'll drive you to his school." Tony sighed when Pepper continued to stare at him. "I don't have to meet him. I can leave right after I drive you there. You'll get there faster anyways."

"It's just... you're not mad that I have to leave?"

"*What?* Why would I be mad? Peter's your son. He comes first. And I don't expect you to sit here

and eat when he's waiting for you at his school."

Pepper really appreciated that. She liked how Tony cared about Peter even though he's never even met him.

She was a nervous wreck the whole way to the school. By the time Tony pulled up, Pepper was itching to hold her son. She undid her seatbelt and hesitated. "Don't leave."

Tony was shocked. "Um-"

"If you want you can. But... I want you to meet him. If you still want to."

"Yes. Of course I want to meet your little genius."

"Okay. Stay here. I'm gonna go get him and bring him out to meet you." Pepper didn't know if it was the right time, it was definitely way too soon but after today, she had no doubts in her mind.

Pepper walked into the school and immediately heard Peter crying and she suddenly regretted telling Tony he could meet Peter today. "Peter, what happened?" Pepper walked into the nurses office and pulled Peter into her arms. "What's wrong?"

Peter sobbed against her. "He-he taked my m-m-markers!"

Pepper was afraid Peter was going to mention something about them sleeping in a tent last night. "Who did, baby?"

Peter rubbed at his eyes and looked around the room. "The older boy!"

"He took your markers?" She felt bad for Peter. This boy who took his markers probably had a ton at home and that was the only thing Peter had. And he was so excited to be getting those yesterday. Now they are gone.

Peter nodded and cried harder. "Yeah. It's all gone."

Pepper rubbed his back and grabbed a Kleenex to wipe the tears and snot off his face. "It's okay. I'll get you some more, okay? Will that make you feel better?"

"Uh huh." The eight year old wrapped his arms around his tummy. "I'm hungry. I didn't eat any lunch."

Pepper couldn't remember if she even packed him any lunch today. She completely forgot.

She hadn't even eaten any breakfast or lunch herself.

"Okay. How about we go get some lunch together then." She lifted Peter off the nurses bed and handed him his jacket. "So, remember I told you about Tony?"

Peter nodded and sniffled.

"He's outside right now. Do you want to meet him?" She held her breath.

Peter nodded. "He's nice, right?"

"Yes. He's so nice. He's going to be so excited to meet you." She grabbed his backpack for him and swung it over her shoulder.

"Carry me." Peter lifted his arms up and normally Pepper would say no but Peter's been through a lot so he gave in and lifted him onto her hip and walked outside, spotting Tony's car. "Is that him?"

Pepper saw Tony getting out of the car and she felt so nervous. She wanted Peter to like Tony because if he didn't, Pepper wouldn't see him anymore.

When she approached Tony, he held his hand out for Peter's much smaller hand. "It's nice to meet you, Peter. I'm Tony."

Peter didn't know how to shake a hand so he placed his hand on top of Tony's, making both adults chuckle.

"I'm eight." Said Peter. He still had stray tears on his cheeks so Pepper wiped them away.

"Woah, you're eight. You're almost double digits."

Peter held up eight fingers. "My birthday was in August and I was seven before."

Pepper pushed the curls out of his eyes and placed him on his feet. "Yeah, and we had a lego man cake."

Peter hid behind Pepper's legs a bit. "I'm hungry now."

Tony looked between the two of them. "We can finish our lunch date and we can all go. If you want?"

Pepper looked down at Peter. "Do you want to go eat lunch with Tony, Petey?"

"Uh huh." He grabbed onto his mom's hand tighter. "Is that your car?"

Tony turned around and opened up the back door. "Yeah, do you like cars?"

Peter shrugged. "No. I like chemistry and science."

"I like your honesty. I like science too. What are you learning in school?" Tony asked as he gestured for Peter to get in but Peter hesitated and tugged on Pepper's shirt.

"My car seat isn't in there."

"I know. How about I sit in the back with you?" She looked at Tony, silently apologizing for

sitting in the back like Tony was a taxi driver. She had to stop apologizing for things, it was so embedded in her mind that she simply couldn't stop.

When they arrived at the same restaurant they were at before, Peter clung onto Pepper the whole time, holding onto her hand and touching her face and wanting to be close. Pepper didn't mind, she was used to it.

Tony didn't seem to mind either, in fact, he looked more interested in Peter than Pepper, chatting away about science, legos, Halloween and their favourite types of candies.

Tony was secretly loving the conversations with Peter, he loved children but was always too afraid to have any of his own.

If Pepper thought she couldn't fall any more in love with Tony, she was wrong.

The scary part was now they were both hiding huge secrets from each other.

Chapter End Notes

I always love reading your comments so share your thoughts!!

I'll be responding to all the comments on the previous chapter now:)

Let's hold onto each other

Chapter Notes

It's almost Friday! I'm so excited for the weekend to sleep in!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They separated at the restaurant.

It took Tony a bit of persistence for him to actually leave them there without him driving them back.

Pepper had nowhere for him to drive them so she told him to leave. She was sad to see him go after spending such an amazing time with him but she wanted to hear what Peter thought of him.

Once his car was out of sight, Pepper grabbed onto Peter's hand and began leading him towards the library. All their stuff was there. There was no way they could afford to lose *everything*.

"Mommy, you're walking too fast!" Peter tried to keep up, almost tripping over his feet.

"We have to get to the library quickly, Peter." Pepper pulled him along, her heart beating quickly in her chest. She tried to ignore the fact that she left all their stuff in a public area while they were having a good time at the restaurant but she was itching to leave because of it.

Once they got to the library, she pulled Peter up the stairs and towards the back of the library but she could see that the desk was empty. "No. No no no no."

"Mommy? What's wrong?" Peter was panicking now too.

Pepper looked around. "All of our stuff, Peter. It's gone!"

"Oh no."

Pepper spotted a worker and rushed up to him. "Excuse me. I was here a few hours ago and I left some stuff behind at that desk." She pointed wildly over to it.

"Sorry, I just started my shift."

Pepper ran a shaky hand through her hair and realized that Peter had been crying so she bent down to pick him up. "Shh shh. It's okay."

"We lost everything!" He cried. He hated seeing his mom so worried and now they had nowhere to stay.

"No, let's go look for it. Don't cry, Peter."

Peter sobbed harder. "Now we have no t-tent and n-n-no h-home!"

"Shh." Pepper covered his mouth briefly and placed him on his feet, looking around to make sure no one heard that. Peter was hard to understand when he cried anyways but it was completely silent in the library. "Let's go find it. Come on." She stood up fully and walked to the front desk.

"Excuse me, I was here a few hours ago and I left my stuff at one of the desks upstairs and it's not there anymore."

"Yes. We took them into the back until we found the owner. I'll go get it."

Pepper sighed in relief and pulled Peter closer. "See? Everything's okay." Everything still wasn't okay. They had to spend another night in the tent and do this all over again tomorrow. And the next day. And the next day.

The woman walked out with the tent and their duffel bag that Pepper took from her gratefully then pulled Peter into the kids section so they could hang out for a bit and relax in the warm building.

She sat in a beanbag chair and pulled Peter onto her lap. "See? Everything's okay."

Peter nodded against her chest.

“What do you think of Tony?” She asked, trying to make Peter take his mind off of everything and also because she wanted to know.

“He's nice. He let me eat his pickles.”

Pepper kept trying to get Peter to eat at the restaurant, he hadn't been eating enough and that was her fault but they had the option of an actual meal and Peter was too busy chatting away with Tony to actually eat.

Pepper was torn between wanting to relax and live in the moment and getting anxiety over the fact that Peter might say something that exposed their lies that Pepper was trying so hard to cover up.

Everything turned out okay in the end though, Peter liked Tony, Peter didn't accidentally say anything he shouldn't and they found their stuff. Pepper had that job interview tomorrow. She debated on bringing all their stuff here again since there was no way she could bring it with her to the interview but that would be something she would have to figure out for tomorrow.

Peter was flipping through a few book pages. The plan was to hang out at the library until dinner then come back until it closed at nine and go back to their spot at the tree and set up their tent for the night.

But right now they didn't have to do that.

Pepper watched Peter play with some of the picture books and then got more comfortable. “Would you like to see Tony again?”

Peter showed Pepper the tiny hat on the elephant. “Look. It's funny. Umm, yeah. He's nice.”

“I can see that. It is funny.” She brushed the curls out of his face. “What did you like about Tony?”

“Ummm.” Peter grabbed another book to look at. “He's funny. And he smells good.”

“Was there anything you didn’t like about him?” Pepper really liked Tony so she needed to know if Peter did too before moving any forward with him.

There was the huge issue that was constantly nagging her at the back of her mind such as the fact that she was lying to Tony about her entire life.

Peter thought about that. “I didn’t like his top. It had a cat on it. I like doggies more.”

That had Pepper laughing out loud. That was good news. Although she was going to have to tell Tony to wear a dog shirt next time.

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Tony filled up his third cup of coffee and looked over the picture of Peter and Pepper.

He needed to tell her.

It was unfair to leave her in the dark but he wanted to send Ben to jail and he knew Pepper wasn’t going to confess if he asked her, if she was going to confess, she would have told the police already.

If what he suspected was true, and Pepper had taken her son and escaped an abusive relationship, which all signs were pointing to that, then Tony wanted to get her confession.

He wanted her to tell him about it so he could put Bens ass in jail.

His fear was telling Pepper the truth then she ran from him and would forever be running from Ben. He wanted to put a stop to this.

Also the fact that he was falling in love with her. Ever since the day he met her practically.

He took a gulp of his coffee and his phone rang. He saw that it was Ben and was going to ignore it but he didn't want to cause any suspicions. "This is Stark."

"It's been a day. I'm wondering if you found anything on my wife and son."

Tony wanted to straight up ask the man if he ever laid his hands on Pepper but he couldn't without sending him running. "You gave me two pieces of information yesterday. I need more time."

"You're supposed to be the best. What happened to that, huh?" Tony could hear something in the background and it sounded like empty glass bottles although Ben didn't sound drunk. Maybe he was just good at hiding it.

"I am the best. Even if I wasn't, that person would still need longer than one day to find two people on barely any information." Tony looked at the picture of them and sighed. "It's likely they aren't here anymore. Why do you think they moved to New York?"

Ben groaned. "We went over this. My wife sold my car here. I tracked that down. And it's hard to go anywhere else without a car."

He was right about that. "I'll call you when I find anything, Ben. I'm looking for them for you."

"Yeah yeah. Call me once you do."

Tony put the phone down. He wanted to protect them.

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"The water's too cold. No." Peter pushed the towel away from his arms.

Pepper sighed. She had been trying to get Peter washed up for the past ten minutes but Peter kept pushing her away. They were locked in the library bathroom and they only had another twenty minutes before it closed.

They didn't have access to any running water so this bathroom had to do. Although Peter was making that extremely difficult for her.

"No, mommy. It's *cold*."

"You haven't bathed in a day. You don't want to go to school smelling tomorrow, do you?" She placed the corner of the towel under the tap and squeezed out the excess water, wiping Peter's legs as he kicked and cried for her to stop.

Pepper stopped.

They were done for today.

She lifted him onto his feet and pulled off his underwear. "Put your pajama pants on. I need to wash these underwear soon." She helped him get into pajamas followed by a second layer and then got her arms and legs washed off the best she could. "Do you need to pee before we go?"

"No!" Peter stomped his foot.

"Did you go poop at school today?" She asked because the last thing they needed was for Peter to need to go number two once they got outside.

Peter threw his head back. "No. I'm tired, *mommy!*"

"Okay. Okay. I know. We're going. Let's go." She zipped his coat up and grabbed all of their belongings then left the library and headed out into the cold.

The second night.

Pepper knew how to set the tent up this time and it wasn't as cold as it was last night which was a plus. Everything was set up and ready for them to sleep in, in under thirty minutes. It was still a long time but tomorrow night she will be better at it. She sighed. She shouldn't have to practice how fast she could build their house for the night.

Yet here they were.

Peter shivered against her. "Mommy. M'hungry."

Pepper was too. They had a big lunch but only had a bagel for dinner. "Tomorrow we will eat a big breakfast. Maybe you can eat cereal and a granola bar."

Peter nodded and stuck his thumb in his mouth. "Okay."

"Oh. I have a surprise for you." She almost forgot about this. Pepper pulled out the book from the library to show Peter. It was dark but they could still see a bit of it.

"Goodnight Moon! I love this book." He moved closer to her. "Read it, mommy."

"Okay, baby. Goodnight Moon. Goodnight stars in the sky..."

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Pepper was rushing to get ready for her job interview.

She had a stain on her blouse that was noticeable but if she wet it to try and wash it out, it might make it more noticeable. Also her skirt had a rip in it but it was the best and *only* one she had so she had to make due.

She also was pretty sure she smelt bad.

She hadn't showered in two days and it was starting to show.

After making herself a bit more presentable in the library bathroom mirror, she took a breath and walked out. She was as ready as she ever was. She had to be ready because she *needed* this job. *Needed it.*

This job interview was going to be the difference between getting back on their feet and spending more nights in a tent.

She needed to make this job interview work out.

As it turns out, she was a bit underprepared. Walking out of the interview, she felt really confident, they seemed to like her and she *really* liked them but she wasn't able to answer some of the questions they had for her.

She wished she spent a bit of time preparing for it yesterday, such as actually knowing about the company.

Overall, Pepper felt very confident about it so she put her ringer on and hoped for the best.

Prayed for the best.

As always, she saw Tony again that day.

Seeing Tony was truly the highlight of her day. He was really the only thing that kept her sane.

They sat in his car and chatted for close to four hours and it was such a refreshing four hours, to get to have an actual conversation with the man about anything and everything, it felt nice to have.

He then dropped her off at Peter's school when it was 3:00pm. Tony wanted to see Peter but Pepper made up a last minute lie saying that she was going to supervise a play date at one of his

friends' houses.

That wasn't the truth.

The truth was that they hadn't bathed in two days and they were sleeping outside and they needed to find a shower somewhere to actually wash their hair and bodies.

There was a gym near their old apartment and it wasn't very popular so Pepper hoped it wouldn't be too expensive to go for the day and only use their showers. It was going to be humiliating but they had to do it.

Pepper was scared she smelt in front of Tony and maybe he just didn't say anything. Although his cologne was very strong so maybe that maxed her stench.

Peter chatted about his day as they walked down the sidewalk but he stopped talking when he recognized the area. "Are we going back home, mommy?"

"No, Petey, there's a gym a block away from our old apartment and we're going to go take a shower there."

Peter frowned. "A shower? In a gym?"

"We need a shower. We smell and your hair is dirty."

Peter giggled. "So is your hair."

It wasn't funny but Pepper laughed for Peter's sake. "I know. So that's why we're going to the gym."

Peter still didn't like that. He stuck out his bottom lip as he followed his mom down the street, almost slipping a few times on the ice as they walked.

Once they made it to the gym, Pepper pulled Peter inside but he was too small to see over the front

desk so he looked at the decorations as his mom spoke to the worker sitting there. He liked the decorations and wished he could have them in his bedroom but he didn't have a bedroom.

"Excuse me, how much is it to use the pool a day?" She asked because she couldn't exactly ask how much it was to use the showers only.

The woman at the front desk did not look happy one bit. "It's on a monthly or yearly subscription. We don't do daily."

Pepper mentally cursed. "Okay. How much is it for one month?" She held her breath, afraid of the answer.

"It's \$65 a month but if you pay up front for a year it's only \$45 a month."

Pepper didn't want to be using the showers there for a year but one month was still extremely expensive. Although they didn't have any other options. It was a one time fee. "And we can come anytime?"

"We're open Monday to Saturday from 9am until 10pm. You can come anytime during those hours."

Pepper thought it over. \$65. That was a lot. That was their next grocery run which they were in dire need of. But they also needed to shower. "Okay. I'll pay for one month." She let go of Peter's hand to count out \$65 from her purse and didn't want to hand the money over. It was so much. But they didn't have a choice. This was something they needed.

Once the fee was paid, Pepper pulled Peter through the doors and searched for the women's change rooms. "Mommy. I don't want to stay here. I don't *want to* shower. Why can't we just go?"

"Because we need to shower so we don't start smelling." She looked down at Peter's face. He had dirt all over it and knew if he didn't shower, he would go to school tomorrow looking exactly like that.

When they walked in, there was a middle aged woman brushing her wet hair in the mirror but there didn't seem to be any more women in there so Pepper pulled Peter along to one of the far showers and shut the curtains behind them.

“Take off your dirty clothes and put them on the bench.” Pepper instructed as she turned the shower on to get it to the right temperature.

She didn’t bring any of the shampoos so all they had was the cheap shampoos and body wash on the walls but it would have to do.

Peter slowly stripped from his pants and underwear then sat on the bench to pull his socks off. “Is it warm water, mommy?”

“Yes, baby. It’s warm water.” Pepper pulled off her own dirty clothes as well and placed them in a pile with Peter’s. She had to find somewhere to wash them but she had nowhere to go.

“Okay.” Pepper got his shirt off and lifted him onto his feet. “It’s too hot.”

“It’s not. Come.”

It was the warmest shower they had in a very long time. Not even the shower at their old apartment had warm water. Pepper struggled to fill up Peter’s baths so this was nice. She splashed him in the face, causing Peter to giggle like crazy.

He slashed her back and for a few minutes, they forgot that they were homeless and having to bathe in a public area.

Peter almost slipped so she stopped splashing him and grabbed the soap dispenser, squeezing some out. “Okay. Time to wash up.”

He was used to it by now so he stood in front of her and let Pepper clean his hair and body. “This smells like bubblegum.” He giggled, licking a splat of soap that landed on his arm then spit it out. “Ew. Definitely don’t taste like bubblegum.”

“Don’t eat it, silly.” She finished getting Peter cleaned and rinsed off and then let Peter splash in the water while she managed to wash her hair fully, not having to worry about the hot water running out.

Once they were both done, Pepper let Peter play in the water for a bit since they had nowhere to go and weren't in a rush to go back to their tent.

After about an hour, Pepper wrapped Peter in a fluffy gym towel and wrapped herself but kept the water on to keep getting the warm steam from it.

It was going to be hard to leave such a warm, bright place and go back outside into the cold.

This was a good thing, they had access to a gym and were lucky enough to be able to come here, maybe it wasn't so bad after all. Maybe.

They were making it work with what they had.

Chapter End Notes

I don't know why the Italics aren't working anymore. It's frustrating because it takes the emotion out of some of the words. Does anyone know why it's doing that?

EDIT: so apparently the italics are back?? Hopefully they stay

Bloom with me and we'll see

Chapter Notes

I'm loving all of your guys comments on this fic! It genuinely makes my days so thank you! Even though I don't reply to every one, I just want to say that I am so incredibly grateful for every single comment:)

Enjoy this chapter!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Things pretty much stayed the same for the following week.

It was a good and bad thing, Pepper supposed.

They slept in the tent every night, setting it up at around 9pm and taking it down before the sun rose then Peter went to school, Pepper went to the library to look for houses or handed out her resume and then she got to see Tony.

He was always there, something she was getting too used to. She counted on him for lunches now. She didn't say that to him but she never ate lunch because he was always there taking her somewhere and occasionally taking Peter out with them for dinner.

Pepper was falling madly in love with Tony in every way and she was terrified of that.

She was terrified that he was going to find out the truth and everything was going to come crumbling down around them.

So things were going good. Until they weren't.

The temperature was supposed to be dropping below freezing tonight.

Although it was still cold at night, they were sleeping in the tent, it wasn't *too* cold. But tonight and for the next few nights, temperatures were going to drop to freezing, so cold in fact it was advised that people keep their pets inside at night.

There was no way they could sleep outside tonight, or for the next few nights.

Pepper could afford four nights in the hotel but after that, she wouldn't have money for her phone bill, groceries, and any other necessary items they would need.

She debated bringing the tent back to the store but it was used and dirty, there was no way they would return it.

The only other option was the motel.

Pepper wanted to consider going to a shelter but that scared her. She's heard some awful stories of how the homeless are treated there and she didn't trust sleeping in an environment there with Peter. On top of the fact that she didn't know where one was but the closest one wasn't going to be within walking distance of Peter's school... and Tony.

So the only other choice was to go to the motel and figure things out from there.

When Pepper picked Peter up from school, despite the fact that their money was running out *very quickly*, she was actually very relieved to be getting back to the motel... if they had a room.

They survived six nights sleeping in the tent but it felt like a lot longer since they didn't know when the end was going to be. She still didn't know, they were just going to the motel for a few nights now.

Until it was warm enough to go back to the tent.

Pepper spotted Peter running out of the school door and she held her arms out for her boy, lifting him up and spinning him around. "Hi. How was school?"

Peter laughed and looked around. "Where's Tony?"

"Oh. He had to do some last minute work things so he couldn't make it today."

Peter frowned. “Oh. I wanted to show him the drawing I made for him at school today.”

Pepper’s heart melted. “You can show him tomorrow. Maybe we’ll see him then.”

Peter shrugged and grabbed onto Pepper’s hand. “Where will we go now, mommy?”

“So, it’s supposed to be very cold tonight so we’re going to go back to the motel.” She was too happy to tell him that.

Peter gasped. “Really?! We get to spend the night there?!”

“Yeah, baby.”

“Yay! No more tent?”

Pepper didn’t know if he meant tonight or forever but she hoped it was forever when she said this.
“Yeah. No more tent.”

“Yay! I get to colour when we go to the motel!” Peter was all too excited but it broke Pepper’s heart.

She wanted Peter to be excited about getting a new toy and not about having a place to sleep tonight. It really shattered her heart but she forced a smile on her face, as always, for Peter.

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Peter was in a bad mood.

Pepper didn't blame him.

She was in a bad mood too but she held it together a bit better than the eight year old did.

Peter flopped onto the bed that barely had any padding in it. He moaned. "I wanna see Tony."

"We'll see him tomorrow."

"No. Today. Today today today." Peter smacked her arm. He was overtired and although he was happy they didn't have to sleep in the tent, he still hated the motel.

"Peter." Pepper warned but she was too tired to really discipline him. "Enough. We'll see him tomorrow."

"No. I don't want to." He crossed his arms and started rolling around on the bed, bumping into Pepper a few times. "No no no no."

"Settle down now, Peter. We're going to bed soon." Pepper grabbed his legs and pulled him closer to herself. "You're way too hyper."

"Am not."

"Are to."

"No!"

Pepper was way too tired. She stood up to get their clothes ready for tomorrow and put the money away that she had been counting.

They were down to their last \$400 she kept in the bank. Then, once that's gone, they were screwed.

So screwed.

“Just go to bed, Peter. You have school tomorrow.” Pepper shut the bathroom light off and put her other shirt on to make her more comfortable to sleep. “Come here. I’ll hold you.”

Peter crawled over to her and stuck his thumb in his mouth. “Will we see Tony tomorrow, mommy?”

“You really like him?” Pepper hoped so. Tony was a really important person in her life at the moment, at least until she told him the truth... so it meant a lot to her that Peter liked him too.

“Uh huh. He plays dinosaur with me. And he knows *all* the names.”

That part amazed Pepper. Just another thing to fall in love with.

“It makes me happy that you like him.” She pressed a kiss to his forehead and shut the light off. “But it’s time to sleep now. We have to be up early tomorrow morning.”

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As it turns out, Peter wanting to see Tony today made for the perfect opportunity.

Pepper went forty minutes out of the city to apply for a decent job that had pretty good pay. Work was more important so if she had to switch Peter’s school and be further away from Tony then so be it.

Although now, she was running late to pick Peter up from school. Her only option and the only person she trusted was Tony so she pulled out her phone and made a quick call. She hesitated because was this even appropriate?

Either way, she made the call.

“Hey.”

It felt so good to hear his voice. “Hey. Um, I have a weird favour to ask you.”

“Anything.”

“Okay.” Pepper blushed. “Can you pick Peter up from school today? I um, I’m not going to make it on time.”

“Yeah.” Tony didn’t hesitate. “Of course I will. Do I just pick him up from the school yard?”

Pepper couldn’t believe he actually said yes. “Yeah. He’ll see you and just tell him I’ll get him in an hour. Just take him to the park or something. And I’ll meet you guys somewhere.”

“Alright. I’ll go get him then. Three o’clock?”

“Three o’clock.” Pepper confirmed with a smile. She was so appreciative of Tony.

And that’s where Tony found himself standing at three o’clock.

He didn’t necessarily know how to take care of kids. Of course he was good with them when their parents were around to take over for the hard parts.

Now he was going to be with Peter for the next hour. He was excited to get to spend some alone time with him. He was with Pepper a lot and now he got to be with Peter. At least for a bit.

Peter spotted the familiar face in the school yard and ran out to greet him. “Tony! Hi! It’s Peter.”

“Hey, buddy. I know who you are.”

Peter smiled. “Oh yeah.” He looked around but he didn’t see his mom and he panicked a bit. “Where’s mommy?”

“Oh. She’s doing some things and she’s going to join us in an hour or so.” Tony knelt down to be at height level with the boy. Peter nodded. “Do you wanna go play at the park for a bit?”

That got Peter excited. He squealed and lifted his arms up. “I want you to carry me there. My feet are tired.”

Tony wasn’t about to say no to that request so he lifted Peter up, smiling to himself at the way Peter seemed to fit perfectly in his arms. “Straight to the park we go.”

He had only been walking for a few minutes when Peter started wiggling his way out of his arms, wanting to walk instead then Peter grabbed onto his much larger hand and tugged him in the direction towards the park. “It’s this way. You have to walk faster.”

Tony chuckled and sped up. He was only walking slow so Peter’s tiny legs could keep up with him. “Okay. Okay. I’m coming. Do you know what park you want to go to?”

Honestly, Tony didn’t know what parks were around here. He couldn’t remember the last time he went to a park to play, never mind even walking past a park anywhere near here.

Apparently Peter knew exactly where they were going.

“Yeah! Carry my backpack please? It’s too heavy.” As soon as Tony grabbed his bag, Peter made a mad dash across the field and towards the park so Tony ran after him. “I beat you! I’m first!”

“You’re so fast. There’s no way I could have caught up to you.”

Peter grinned. His mom always told him he was super fast but she never ran in the parks with him anymore. He knew she was tired because he could see it on her face when she picked him up from school so he tried to be good for her. Sometimes it was really hard though.

“Let’s climb up to the top of the slide and race each other down now.” Peter grabbed his backpack

out of Tony's hands and put it off to the side for now. "I get a ten second head start. Go!"

Tony loved Peter's energy. He was so used to being around adults all day every day, dealing with people's problems but Peter was like a breath of fresh air.

He breathed the life back into Tony again and he loved being around him.

Peter was like this beaker of life he's been searching for all this time.

He followed him up towards the slide and almost slipped on the ice surrounding the entire play structure. "Uh Pete, this definitely isn't safe. It's full of ice."

Peter slid over the icy bridge. "Yeah! It's fun! Slide with me, Tony!"

Tony carefully made his way up to the slides and grabbed onto Peter's arm. "Come. Let's go back down before we slip."

"No. I wanna go down the slides!" Peter really wanted to and he wasn't going to take no for an answer so he grabbed onto Tony and forced him to sit down. "You go down this one. I go down that one. Sit. Sit sit sit."

"Okay okay." Now that Tony thought about it, this was why the park was so empty. There was no one there because no one was crazy enough to go on the icy play structure in the middle of winter.

Maybe it was a glimpse into their future together and all the crazy shenanigans they would get up to together.

He sat down and they both went down the double slide, both of them going flying off of it and sliding on their butts across the ground, ending in a giggle fit from Peter and regret from Tony. He was going to wake up really sore the next day but it was the most fun he's had in a long, *long* time.

Peter rolled on the ground and laughed then went to help Tony up. "Again again!"

Tony groaned and brushed the snow off of him and Peter. “No more, silly boy. Are you hungry? How about we go get some food someplace warm. And dry?”

Peter liked the sounds of that. He was hungry but he learned to ignore his hunger pains. “Yeah! I want hot chocolate with extra marshmallows!”

When Tony went to go grab his backpack, Peter followed him and pointed across the giant field to a large tree. “That’s my bedroom.”

Tony looked in the direction he was pointing. He was confused but he was aware of the fact that kids said some weird things. “Oh yeah? It’s a nice bedroom.”

Peter frowned. “No. All the monsters come at night.”

Little did Tony know that he wasn’t just being a kid with an active imagination, he was really telling the truth.

Tony looked down at Peter. He didn’t want to take advantage of Pepper by using her vulnerable son to get answers from him but Pepper told him almost nothing about certain aspects of their life. It was a bit frustrating but Tony understood why. Of course he couldn’t tell her that yet.

“Is your house close to here, Peter?”

Peter thought about it. He didn’t know where the motel was. “Ummm... sometimes. If we’re close to it then yeah.”

Tony didn’t understand what that meant. “Oh. Okay. Do you miss your old house?”

Peter skipped along with Tony as they walked. “No. I like it here better. It was poopier at other house.”

Tony didn’t understand what that meant either so he left it. He felt bad for asking Peter questions just to get information out of him that Pepper didn’t tell him.

Either way, he didn't feel right doing it so he stopped.

He wasn't there to take advantage of an eight year old boy's vulnerability when his mother, whom he was in love with, wasn't around. So instead, he took Peter to the cafe where him and Pepper met again for the second time and embraced the warmth.

"This was where your mom and I met for the second time."

Peter was more interested in the cakes in the class window. "Tony. I need to pee."

"Okay um, the bathroom is this way." He led Peter into the men's single stall bathroom and opened the door. "I'll be here."

Peter hesitated. He didn't want to go in there alone. "*No*. I need help."

Tony hesitated. He wasn't prepared for this but he went into the bathroom with Peter anyway and locked the door behind them. "Okay... pull down your pants and go pee."

Peter unzipped his jacket and placed it on the floor then tugged his pants and underwear down to his ankles and sat on the toilet, holding onto the sides so he didn't fall in. Tony cringed, thinking about all the germs on the seat from everyone using it.

"Why don't you stand up?" He asked, feeling a bit awkward in the situation.

"I don't know how." Peter finished and stood up then turned to flush the toilet, watching it go down. "Do you need to go?"

"No, thanks. I'm good."

Peter got his underwear and pants pulled back up, getting himself situated and then he rolled up his sleeves to wash his hands. "This is how we wash our hands at school to get all the germs off."

“Wow. I should take some pointers on that.” Tony joked but apparently Peter’s humour was more advanced than his because Peter didn’t laugh.

After they were done in the bathroom, they stood in the line to wait and Tony got Peter whatever he wanted. He had a feeling Pepper would be mad at him later for getting her son a bunch of sugar but he wasn’t going to say no to the boy.

He enjoyed the time he had with Peter until Pepper arrived. It was a short hour but after Pepper arrived, as much as he wanted to see her, he wished he had just a little bit more time with Peter.

He stood up to greet Pepper, pressing a kiss to her cheek and sliding forward a tea and a cinnamon bun. “I got this for you. Peter picked out the cinnamon bun.”

“Oh! Thank you, you two.” She pulled Peter onto her lap and pressed a ton of kisses all over his face. “Did you have a good day at school today?”

Peter nodded. “Uh huh. And after me and Tony went to the park and it was all icy and even we went flying down the slides like a rocket.”

“Woah.” She looked at Tony, amazed that he actually did that for Peter. She used to, but nowadays she was way too stressed, had no time, and was too tired. Basically every excuse in the book of being an awful mother. She wanted to do that and be there for Peter but it was too difficult right now. “I’m glad you guys had so much fun.”

Tony genuinely did. “Yeah, anytime you need me to pick him up from school or watch him, just let me know.”

“Did you just find your new passion for babysitting?” Pepper teased him.

“Maybe I did.” He teased back and then the three of them finished their food and continued talking as if they had been doing that for years.

Everything felt so right whenever they were with Tony but at the same time, everything felt like it was just waiting to come crumbling down from under their feet.

That's why when they said their goodbyes to Tony, Pepper always made sure to enjoy the time they had with him because it always felt like it was going to be the last time they would see him.

She hated living that way but it was something she couldn't control.

Peter was sad to leave Tony but with the promise of seeing him tomorrow, he felt happy about that.

He was in such a good mood so once they arrived at the motel, Peter pulled out his homework to get started on that but got distracted with his book. "Mommy? Can I bring Goodnight Moon to school tomorrow to show my friends?"

Pepper was organizing their clothes. "No, honey. It stays here."

"Please. I really want to show them at circle time." Peter stood up and leaned on the bed with his book against his chest. "Please. Mommy."

Pepper sighed. "Fine. But put it right back in your bag after because it's not our book to lose." She smiled at Peter's excitement and placed the clothes on the table.

"Okay. Time to shower. Let's go."

It was the same routine they were following. Although she was glad they were in a motel for the night with a roof over their heads.

Chapter End Notes

What do you guys think?

How is the truth going to unravel?

Is Ben going to make an appearance?

Turn my grief to grace

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Today was awful.

Today was by far the worst day yet.

All the hope Pepper had of them getting out of that motel they've spent the last three nights in, taking all of their cash and savings, was washed down the drain from one single phone call.

There was no hope left. Pepper didn't know what to do.

She was beyond drowning.

They were going to have to take out a loan and no one would let her buy a house if she was in debt. That would be the end of it.

It all started with one phone call that she had been anxiously waiting for for a week. She got the call as she was going to pick Peter up from school. They were supposed to see Tony soon after too.

"Hello?"

"This is Rachel calling from our interview we had last week."

A huge smile spread across Pepper's face. She hoped she got the job. This was a good sign that they were calling. "Hi Rachel."

"So I am sorry to inform you that unfortunately you did not get the job. We are sorry."

Pepper stopped walking in the streets. Her face went pale and her knees left like they were going to give out. Someone bumped into her but she didn't care. "What? Why not?"

“We feel that although we liked your personality, you just didn’t have the qualifications we’re looking for.”

Pepper covered her hand over her eyes because she didn’t want to start crying. Not over the phone. “You saw my resume. You thought I was qualified then.”

“Yes. Although when we asked to expand on your skill knowledge, you couldn’t meet the qualifications we are looking for. We are very sorry and we wish you all the best. Good bye now.”

It took everything in Pepper to not throw her phone across the icy sidewalk. “Fuck you, Rachel!”

Everyone was looking at her like she was crazy but she didn’t care. She just lost out on the one opportunity that was going to help them get out of the giant rut they were in.

There was no other way out but that job. Pepper applied to almost every single available job in Queens and she heard nothing back. No follow ups, no interviews and the one job she did manage to get an interview for, she didn’t even get the job.

All Pepper could see in the next few days was them completely running out of money, not even being able to stay in the motel and then they were screwed.

So screwed.

Her phone started to ring as she walked to Peter’s school, angry, heartbroken and worried, so she pulled it out of her jacket pocket she previously shoved in there and checked who was calling.

It was Tony.

She pressed decline.

She couldn’t talk to him right now.

They've had an amazing past few weeks together.

They've been out for lunch or dinner, sometimes both, for the past few weeks and he made her hell she was living in secret just a little bit better.

But now, she was going to lose everything and she was going to have to tell him. It was going to end. Her friendship with possibly the best, most amazing, kind, caring human being she ever met, was going to end once she told him.

Pepper felt guilty for lying to him again and again, she didn't want to do it anymore...

Her phone rang again so she stopped walking and tried to calm herself down. "Hello?"

It was silent for a few moments on the other end. "Hey. Are you alright?" Tony sounded concerned.

Pepper nodded and tried to stop the sob. "Yep. I'm just on my way to pick Peter up from school."

Tony's voice sounded sad when he spoke next. "Okay... I know, that's why I was calling to see if you want to hang out together for a bit?"

Pepper walked the last block to Peter's school and leaned against the fence to wait for the bell to ring. "No. It's okay, don't come. Umm... it's fine."

"...Are you sure you're okay?"

Pepper couldn't talk to him without breaking down. She really liked Tony. He was there for her, he was funny, they got along amazingly and she didn't want to have to watch him leave her life like everyone else did.

Ben pushed away all her friends, one by one. Then he pushed away her family. And now, almost four months later, he is still having power and control over her and pushing everyone away.

And now he was going to push Tony away.

“I’m fine. I gotta go. Bye Tony.” Pepper hung up the phone and wiped the tears from her eyes as she waited for the bell to ring and for Peter to come running out to hug her.

Usually no matter how good or bad her day was, seeing Peter running to her arms was always the highlight of her day and made her day just a little bit better but not today.

It seemed like Peter had just as bad of a day as Pepper did.

He slowly walked out with a frown on his face and dragging his feet.

Pepper walked closer to him. “Why are you upset?”

Peter crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against her legs. “I didn’t like today.” He mumbled.

“Me neither.” She struggled to stay positive. She always did but not right now. Right now, she had zero hope and positivity for the future.

With a sigh, Peter spoke. “I lost Goodnight Moon.”

Pepper pulled him away by his shoulders so she could look at him. “You what?”

“I lost Goodnight Moon.” He said again, looking up at Pepper with his big brown eyes that had slowly lost all the light in them over the past few weeks.

Pepper ran her hand through her hair. She knew she shouldn’t have sent that book with Peter to school like he asked. “Peter. C’mon.”

Peter lifted his arms up. “Pick me up. I want a hug. Mommy.”

“No. No.” She grabbed his arms. “I’m not picking you up. You need to learn to act your age, Peter. I specifically told you not to lose this book. You know how expensive that’s going to be to replace with the library now?”

The eight year old shook his head and his bottom lip started to shake. “No.”

“Expensive. I don’t have money for that!” Pepper yelled then looked around the school yard. She didn’t mean to yell but she was pissed off at the world and was unintentionally taking it all out on her son right now.

Peter’s eyes started to water and then he began crying. “I’m sorry, mommy! Don’t be mad at me!” He cried.

Pepper shook her head and tried not to cry herself. “We don’t have the money to sleep anywhere tonight. All our money is gone and now because you lost that book, we don’t get to buy any food for us to eat.”

Peter cried harder. “I’m sorry!”

“I don’t know what we’re supposed to do, Peter. All I asked was for you to not to lose the freaking library book. And you lost it!”

Peter was a sobbing mess at this point and honestly, so was Pepper.

“Mommy! I’m sorry!” He cried.

“What’s going on?”

Pepper turned around at the familiar voice and her heart fell when she saw Tony walking towards them. She had no idea how much he heard. She looked away and completely broke down.

She couldn’t hold herself together anymore.

Peter ran over to Tony's arms, his backpack bouncing on his back. "Tony! Mommy's mad at me!" He sobbed and lifted his arms up, wanting to be picked up.

Tony lifted the eight year old up and set him on his hip, he didn't really know what he walked in on. Apparently nothing good. "Pepper?"

Pepper refused to look at him. He's never seen her cry or in this case, sob like a mad woman.

Tony looked at Peter. "What's wrong?"

Peter wiped at his tears and pointed at his mom. "She's mad at me! I said sorry!"

Tony walked over to Pepper and placed his hand on her back but she violently flinched so he removed it and backed away. "Pepper. What's going on? Pepper?"

"She's mad at me cause I lost Goodnight Moon." Peter was starting to calm down now but seeing his mom so worked up was making him even more upset.

Tony didn't understand that. "Well, I can buy you another book if you want. It's not the end of the world."

Pepper wiped the tears off her cheeks and turned around, holding her arms out for Peter but he shook his head. "C'mon, Peter. We're going home. Let's go."

"No. No!" He wrapped his tiny arms around Tony's neck. He didn't want to go with his mom. He felt safe with Tony. "Noooo!"

Pepper tried to grab Peter out of Tony's arms but he was kicking and screaming and Tony wasn't doing anything to help because he wasn't letting go of Peter.

"Just tell me what's going on." Tony tried.

"Let's go, Peter. Right now!"

“No. No no no! Nooooo-”

So much was going on at once so Pepper lost it. “I can’t do this anymore! We’re homeless! We have nothing! We lost everything! Everything! Everything is gone. We don’t have a house, a car, food, money, clothes. Nothing!”

Everyone stopped.

Tony was stunned.

He stared at Pepper for a few moments trying to process what she just said. She was homeless. Peter and her were homeless. “How long?” Was all he said.

Pepper wiped her eyes. She was honestly surprised Tony wasn’t running right now.

“Um... three weeks.”

Tony nodded. “Come back to my house and tell me everything.”

Pepper shook her head and tried to grab Peter again. “No. We gotta go. Come, Peter.”

“Mm-mm!”

Tony grabbed Pepper's hand slowly. “Please.”

She placed her head in her hands. She hadn’t been to Tony’s house before. He wanted to take her there a few times but after she ran out of excuses, she simply said she was uncomfortable and he respected that.

Now, that’s where they were going. She lifted her head up and nodded. “Okay.”

She was about to tell him everything.

The drive there was quick. About fifteen minutes. He lived in Manhattan and something he had neglected to tell her about was the fact that he lived in a freaking tower with his last name plastered on the side of it.

Of course she wasn't mad, she neglected to tell him about a lot worse.

She stayed quiet about the fact that he lived in a tower. She was focused on other things at the moment.

Once they went up in the elevator to the penthouse, Tony got Peter set up with some cheese and crackers in a room with a tv then walked out to join Pepper on the couch.

"Hey."

She took a sip of her tea he got for her. He knew exactly how she liked it by now. "I've um, I've been keeping something from you for, well, since I met you and I don't want to keep it a secret anymore."

Tony nodded, giving her his full attention. Of course, he already knew what it was but he wanted to hear her story.

Pepper took a deep breath. "I'm married." She didn't know why she started out like that. "Peter's dad didn't die in a car accident when he was two, he's still alive. Well, at least he was the last time I saw him."

"What do you mean?"

"Umm..." Pepper decided how she wanted to go about this. "Okay. His name is Ben Parker. I met him when I was twenty and three months later I was pregnant with Peter so we got married and moved in together. I wanted to break it off with him before that but then I got pregnant... I didn't think he was going to be a good father but he proved me wrong. He was there for Peter, he loved him and was present in his life when he wasn't at work, but then when Peter turned five, Ben... he

changed. I didn't know it at the time but his job let him go so he started drinking and he became super aggressive and angry."

Pepper started crying. She shook her head. "I never let him lay his hands on Peter."

Tony gasped. So his suspicions were true. "So he hit you?"

Pepper nodded.

Tony saw red. He stood up to start pacing. He was going to kill Ben and he knew exactly where the man was.

She continued. "I-I never let him hit Peter. Ben got a new job, he would come home angry and take it out on me. He'd yell, say some stuff, but he never touched Peter."

Tony sighed. That was a relief but it wasn't over.

"Then one day Peter did something, I don't remember what." She sobbed. "Ben picked him up and threw him against the wall and that's when I knew we had to leave. The next day we were gone."

"And you came here?" Tony forced his voice to remain calm even though he felt every fiber in his body want to go and rip Ben apart for what he's done to these two people who have become two of the most important people in his life over the short time he's known them.

Pepper nodded. "Ben-he showed the signs when we first met but I ignored them because I was in love with him. He was controlling, manipulative, just an angry person in general. Then when Peter was born, he got better and-and I thought he was changed... then five years later he was the same person he used to be, controlling, manipulative, angry, wanting Peter and I to be his and his and his only."

She looked at Tony for the first time since she walked into his tower. "He's a fucked up man. I'm worried he'll kill me if he finds me. I-I put Peter in the car and drove, never looking back."

"Your name is Pepper Parker and Peter Parker." Tony said. "Not Pepper and Peter Moore."

Pepper cried into her hands. "I'm sorry I lied to you. I had to. I was terrified he'd find us. I am." She corrected.

Tony wanted her to admit to this. He opened his mouth to speak. He needed to tell her everything and explain. It wasn't fair now to keep Pepper in the dark about what he was hiding from her since it involved her. "Pepper-"

"No. Don't say anything. I'm sorry I lied to you. I-I feel like an awful mother to Peter and-"

"You don't need to apologize to me. Don't be sorry." He reached out to rub her thigh. "Where um, where have you guys been staying?"

Now was time for the embarrassing part. She was ashamed of herself. "Um... well, after we left, that was almost four months ago. I sold the car, found a cheap apartment that we lived in for three months but... I couldn't keep up with the payments so... we got evicted with hours notice. Then we went to this... motel... for a few nights but-but I just couldn't afford it and pay for everything else. Then I was fired from my job. So..."

She didn't want to tell Tony this part but she didn't want to lie to him anymore. "So I bought a tent."

Tony couldn't believe it. He didn't know it was so bad. He honestly didn't expect they were homeless. He felt awful for not noticing and not helping out. Hell, he's spent every single day with Pepper and most days with Peter for the last three weeks... and he had absolutely no idea they were homeless.

Of course he wasn't digging up information on Pepper, if he was, he would have figured it out in minutes. Maybe he should have...

He grabbed both of her hands. "Pepper, I-I'm sorry I didn't know or-or notice. If I had known, I would have done something."

"No. I didn't want you to know."

Tony nodded. He was silent for a few moments and it scared Pepper that he was trying to think of the best way to tell her to get out.

“Please don’t tell me you guys slept outside in a tent.”

Pepper looked away. “We did. For six nights.”

Tony should have known. He should have.

“We um, it was too cold so we went back to the motel-”

“Stay with me.” Tony said before he could even think about what he was saying. “I- you and Peter. Stay here and live with me. I mean, at least until you guys can get back on your feet. Or... longer. Whenever.”

“Um,” Pepper smiled and tried to cover her mouth. She loved that offer.

“You don’t have to even share a floor with me. I’ve got a whole tower.”

Pepper smiled harder. “Could we stay on this floor with you?”

“Yes. Yeah, I have empty bedrooms you guys can stay in for as long as you want.” Tony still needed to tell her but he was scared now. He didn’t know how without making her hate him.

He was a bit terrified that she was going to run away on him.

Although he didn’t blame her.

Pepper laughed and leaned in for a kiss then pulled away. “Thank you.”

Tony had been wanting to do that pretty much the day he met her. He pulled her closer to deepen

the kiss. "I'm in love with you." He said once he pulled away. It was soon. Definitely way too soon but he wasn't going to lose this woman.

Pepper didn't know how to react. She had been trying to convince herself she wasn't falling in love with Tony but deep down, she knew she was. She laughed again and pulled him in for another kiss just after saying, "I'm in love with you too."

Tony was the one to pull away first.

"Would you and Peter want to move in with me?" Tony was jumping the gun. It was way too soon but he wasn't going to send them onto the streets and... well, he was in love with the woman sitting across from him.

"I um," She wanted to say yes but she was scared of commitment after Ben. She had a lot she needed to work on. "I've never been with anyone other than my husband. He... definitely messed me up in the head and I don't want you to feel like you have to fix me or-or take care of me or something."

"Wha- no. No, absolutely not." He grabbed her hands again. "I'm not changing the way I look at you. I don't see you as... as a charity case or some shit. I want you for you. Before I knew all of this, I still wanted you. That's not changing."

Pepper loved the sounds of that. "Thank you. Thank you thank you thank you." She pulled him in for a kiss and stood up. "I'm going to tell Peter that we're going to be staying with you... for a while."

Tony stood up too. He wanted it to be for forever but he wasn't going to force that onto her. "Okay. I'll be here. Oh, do you want me to drive you to go pick up your stuff?"

"Oh." Pepper thought of Peter's favorite pajamas and teddy bear. "Yes. Peter has some stuff he'll want."

She smiled one last time at Tony then walked down the hallway towards the room Peter was left to snack and watch tv in. Pepper opened the door and found Peter laying on the bed and sucking on his thumb.

The last time she spoke to him she was yelling at him and making him cry in the middle of his school yard. “Hey.”

Peter turned to look at her and offered a tiny wave then went back to watching the cartoon on the tv.

“I want to say that I’m really sorry I yelled at you today.” She had Peter’s attention now so she walked over to the bed and climbed up, laying down next to Peter. Wow. This bed was comfortable, extremely comfortable. She hadn’t slept on a bed this comfortable in months.

She went back to what she was saying. “It was wrong of me to get mad at you. You didn’t do anything wrong and the only reason I got upset with you was because I was having a really bad day and I was upset.” Pepper reached over to caress Peter’s soft face. “Even adults get upset too.”

Peter nodded. “I was still really sad.”

“I know. And I’m really sorry.” Peter nodded again. “So, what do you feel about staying with Tony for a little bit?”

Peter thought about it. He liked Tony. He was nice and funny and made his mom laugh. And he brought him chocolate croissants.

“Live here? In his tower?”

“Yeah. At least until we can land back on our feet. Or for longer than that.” Pepper didn’t know how to feel about living with Tony. She felt both happy and grateful for him but she also felt a bit like she was using him for it. She didn’t like that.

He did so much for her, bought her dinner, lunch, coffees, all she did for him was buy him one muffin at the grocery store bakery once.

There was no way she could repay him for everything he’s done for her. Never.

She hesitated but nodded at Peter’s question. “Yeah. Right here. With him. Would you like that?”

Peter pulled his thumb from his mouth and nodded aggressively. “Yes! Yes yes yes! I’d love to!” He threw himself into Pepper’s arms for a quick hug then pulled away. “No more tent?”

“Nope.”

“And no more smelly motel?”

“Never again. I promise you.”

Peter slid off the bed and rushed into the living room, finding Tony sitting on the couch so he ran over to him and jumped onto the couch beside him. “Are we moving in with you?”

Tony put his phone away. “Yeah. Do you want to?”

The eight year old nodded aggressively.

“Okay. I’m glad. I’m gonna drive you guys to go pick up your stuff from the motel you were staying in. Then you’re gonna come back here.”

Peter stared at him. He really liked Tony. “Okay.”

When Pepper silently walked over, she observed the two of them briefly. She could see her future just like this. Everything felt so right in that moment.

She didn’t know how long she was actually standing there when Tony slapped his knees and stood up. “Let’s go get your stuff and get you guys the hell out of that place.”

Pepper was a bit embarrassed to bring Tony there but she told him everything so there was nothing left to hide anymore. Besides the fact she tried to get herself cleaned up in a library bathroom with a damp paper towel.

For some reason, that point in her life seemed so far away now although it's only been a week.

She thought about how today started out, she found out she didn't get the job and then Tony called at the most perfect, unexpected time and witnessed her yelling at Peter over a stupid library book. Everything happened for a reason, she understood that now.

If she got that job, she would have been over the moon and beyond excited, then Tony would have called her and she would've said yes to seeing him, most likely not getting upset about the lost library book and she never would have told Tony.

Everything happens for a reason.

The car ride to the motel was depressing. Pepper held Peter's hand in the backseat the whole time and zoned out as Tony and Peter chatted together. She didn't have the mental energy to join in on the conversation.

Tony pulled up and Peter got really silent. "I don't want to go inside. I want to go back to Tony's Tower, mommy."

"It's okay. I'll go in quickly. Can you stay with him?"

Tony looked back at her. "Yeah. Are you sure you don't want help?"

"No. I'll be five minutes." She got out of the car and walked into their room. Less than twelve hours ago she was on a totally different path in her life.

There were dirty clothes laid out on the bed that she cringed at. She attempted to wash their socks and underwear in the bathtub but it didn't work out since it didn't get warm enough to actually dry properly.

Once she gathered everything, Pepper picked up the tent and thought about it. They didn't need that anymore.

She placed it back on the floor, leaving that part of their life behind.

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Pepper couldn't sleep.

She had been lying in the bed with Peter passed out next to her for the past two hours but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't sleep.

After they got back from picking up their stuff, Tony ordered up food then Pepper and Peter went into the shower. It was by far the most refreshing shower in Pepper's life.

She felt like she was washing off all the stress and worry from the past four months.

Now she couldn't sleep.

Peter was safe and warm so she slipped out of the bed and walked down the hallway to Tony's bedroom without giving it a second thought.

She knocked on the door, not even thinking about the fact that she may have been waking him up.

She was about to turn and walk away but Tony's voice came from the other side of the door.

"Come in."

Pepper slowly opened the door. "Hey."

"Hey."

Without thinking, she walked over and sat on the edge of his bed. “Did I wake you?”

“No, I’ve just been on my phone and I-”

“Did you only ask Peter and I to live with you because you found out we’re homeless and you felt bad for us?” She blurted out. That was probably what she was worried about.

Tony was caught off guard. He sat up a bit. “Are you asking if I pity you?” Pepper nodded. “No. I don’t. You actually hid the fact that you were homeless pretty well. But I don’t pity you. Or Peter. I want you to live here with me because I’m falling in love with you and I want you here with me.”

That brought a smile and blush to Pepper’s face. “I was hoping you’d say something like that.”

Tony placed his hand on her cheek. “I really want to kiss you right now.”

“Are you asking permission?”

“Maybe...”

“I accept.” She flirtatiously giggled as they pressed their lips together.

The night ended with her lying in Tony’s arms. She wanted to stay there. He was warm and had a way of making her feel safe and like anything was possible but she couldn’t stay.

“I can’t stay.”

Tony hummed. “Why not?”

“Peter.” Was all she said and Tony seemed to understand. He sat up and bit, removing his arm from around her. “We haven’t slept apart in... a long time. I don’t want him to wake up and I’m gone.”

“I understand.” Tony got out of bed and walked her to the door. “Want me to walk you down the hallway?”

“I’m sure I’ll survive the ten steps by myself.”

“I’ll come just in case.” He smirked and opened his bedroom door to walk her down the hallway.

“My stop is here.” Puled grabbed his shirt collar to pull him down for a kiss and then opened up the bedroom door and walked in.

Tony followed her in. “Is he still sleeping?” He leaned over to see his face.

“Yeah. He’s a pretty good sleeper.”

“He sucks his thumb?” He observed.

“Oh.” Pepper was so used to it she kinda forgot he did it. “Yeah. He’s been sucking his thumb since he stopped with the pacifier.”

Tony honestly didn’t know much about children. He was good with them for about ten minutes and then he got kinda annoyed with them. But with Peter it was different. He just felt so connected to him in a way he couldn’t explain it.

“That’s kinda adorable.” Tony admitted then looked away from Peter. “I’m gonna go now so sleep good. I’m Uh, I’ll be in my room if you need me.”

Pepper laughed quietly. “Okay. Thank you. Again.”

Tony pressed one last kiss to her lips before he left.

And for the first time since Pepper could remember, she went to sleep without any fears.

Chapter End Notes

So I just want to clarify that Tony didn't know they were homeless. All he knew was that Ben was looking for Peter and Pepper and had suspicions on him abusing her.

Do you guys think it was fair for Tony to let her stay with him without telling her his secret?

Is this my happy ever after?

Chapter Notes

Last chapter!!

Will everyone have the happy ending they deserve?

Will Ben make an appearance?

Will Pepper take Peter and run?

Sometimes some stories don't have a happy ending...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Pepper was the first one up.

She was used to waking up early anyways but at least today she didn't have to wake Peter up to take their tent down before the sun rose. They got to stay inside the warm tower and not have to worry about where they would get their next meal or if they had a place to spend the night.

Although she was still awake before the sun came up.

Pepper looked at Peter and saw he was still deep in sleep.

He needed it.

The poor boy had to stay up late and wake up early way too many nights in a row. He needed to sleep.

That was why Pepper decided to keep Peter home from school today, so he could rest and adjust to what was going to happen now; staying with Tony.

Pepper stayed with Peter in the bedroom until he started to wake up. She wanted to be there for that. "Good morning, baby."

Peter stretched and rubbed at his eyes. “Mm. Where’re we?”

Pepper laughed. “We’re at Tony’s house, remember?”

Now he remembered. He looked around the room. It was nice and big and everything looked very fancy. “Mhmm. Mm, where’s Tony?”

“I don’t know.” Pepper picked up her phone on the nightstand table. It was only 8:30am. They got to sleep in an extra few hours but it was still early so she didn’t know if Tony would be awake or not.

Peter felt his tummy rumble so sat up. “I’m hungry.”

“Me too. Let’s go find something to eat.” She grabbed ahold of his hand but as soon as she opened up the bedroom door, she felt uncomfortable. Like she was using Tony and invading in on his life.

Even though she told him that he was fine and wanted them to be there, she still felt uncomfortable over the situation. Maybe it was because Tony knew everything now.

He knew the truth about everything now.

To her surprise, when they walked around the corner, Tony was already awake and cooking pancakes. It made Pepper smile. “Wow. These smell delicious, Tony.”

Tony turned to look at her. “Thanks. I made lots. Help yourself.” He filled up a cup of apple juice, knowing it was Peter’s favourite. “Here, bud.”

“Yummy. Thank you.” Peter climbed up onto the kitchen island stool and sat himself down. “Can you cut my pancakes?” Peter slid his plate across to Tony but Pepper grabbed it.

“I’ll do it, baby.”

“No. I want Tony to.” Peter pushed it closer to him.

“I don’t mind.” He truly didn’t.

He got the pancakes cut up and looked at Pepper. He needed to tell her the truth now and he was terrified of how she was going to react.

But he needed to tell her.

“What?” Pepper asked. He had been staring at her this whole time.

Tony chuckled. “I was just wondering if you wanted me to cut your pancakes up too?” He joked.

“Oh.” Pepper laughed along with him. “I’m good.”

The three of them ate together and Tony was trying to enjoy that meal with them because it might be the last. He was really starting to regret not telling Pepper sooner.

This might just backfire on him and he wasn’t ready to lose these two amazing people in his life just because he messed up so badly.

After they finished eating, Tony took a breath and placed the plates in the sink then turned around to look at Pepper. “So... I have to talk to you about something.” He looked at Peter. “Privately.”

Pepper froze for a few seconds. “Oh. Yeah um,” Her heart was racing so quickly. “Peter, can you go watch some tv in the other room. Tony and I are just going to talk quickly.”

Peter was about to whine about it but then he remembered the working tv in there so he hopped off the stool and made his way down the hallway and into the room. Pepper turned to look at Tony. He was going to kick them out. She knew it. She was already thinking about asking him for some money to use because they had nothing. Absolutely nothing.

“Um,” Pepper said, trying not to overthink too much.

Tony walked over to the couch and waited until Pepper sat down. He didn't know how to begin. He was up almost all night thinking about how to say it.

He took a breath. "So... you were honest with me last night. And I need to tell you some things right now. I should have um, I should have told you a long time ago but I didn't. And I can explain why but--"

Pepper was so confused and a bit scared now. "Tony. What?"

"Okay. My job, I wasn't completely honest about it with you. When I told you I help people, you thought I meant a therapist or something. Well, it's a little bit more complicated than that." Tony sighed. He just had to come out and say it. "I'm a private investigator." He looked at Pepper for her reaction.

"...Okay..."

This was the hard part. "Ben hired me to find you and Peter three weeks ago."

Pepper felt her heart drop into her stomach. *No. No. No no no no.* "No. You're messing with me."

"I promise you I'm not--"

"I swear to god, Tony, if you are messing with me right now! I swear to god."

Tony wished he was. "I'm not."

Pepper stood up and began pacing the room. Ben was going to find her. He was going to find her and probably kill her then take Peter and do who knows what with him. Ben was going to kill her and Peter was going to be left without a mother.

She looked at Tony. He knew. He knew this whole time. "So you knew my abusive husband was looking for me and didn't tell me?! You've been lying to me for *weeks?!'*"

Tony continued to stay seated. “No, I didn’t know he was abusive. I promise you I didn’t know that. I was trying-”

“You son of a bitch.” Pepper ran her hands through her hair. She couldn’t believe this. She couldn’t fucking believe this. “Oh my god. You *knew*. You knew this entire time! How could you? I trusted you! I trusted you alone with *my son*! What? Were you trying to get information from me and that’s why you pretended to like me? Oh my *god*! You were, weren’t you?”

Tony stood up and shook his head. “No. *No*. I wasn’t pretending anything, Pepper. Please let me explain. Ben, he-”

“Don’t! Don’t. You’re a liar. You used me to what? Get my husband to pay you once you... *hand us* over to him? Huh?”

Tony felt sick at the thought alone. “Absolutely not. That was never my plan. I was trying to find out if-”

“Stop.” She cut him off. Tony tried to touch her and she pushed him off. “Don’t touch me! You’re a liar. I poured my heart out to you last night. I trusted you and told you *everything*.” Pepper felt like she had been stabbed in the chest.

How could this be happening?

She thought she found her happily ever after with Tony.

Boy was she ever wrong.

She wanted to cry but she was too angry to cry. She wanted to get the hell out of there. How was she supposed to move on from this?

“I’m leaving.” Pepper started walking towards the bedroom to get Peter. “I’m getting the fuck out of here and away from *you*. You’re a monster. You knew this entire time and you knew I have a young son, you didn’t think I *needed to know*?!”

“I’m sorry, Pepper. I-”

“Oh please.” Pepper walked into the bedroom and looked back at Tony standing in the doorway. He looked completely distraught. She felt a tad guilty for walking out but quickly shut those emotions down.

“Stand up, Peter. We’re leaving. Get your stuff.”

Peter sat up quickly. “Why? Mommy? Where’re we going?” Peter got off the bed and looked between his mom and Tony. The uncomfortable tension in the room made his eyes water. “Mommy?”

“Get your stuff. *Now*, Peter.” Pepper pointed to his stuff on the bed but he didn’t move.

“Where’re we goin’?”

Pepper packed his stuff for him to make it quicker. They had nowhere to go but she wasn’t going to stay here.

It was over.

She was already planning on leaving New York now. Just to get away from Tony.

Tony stood in the doorway and watched her get their things to leave. “Pepper please. I promise you I can explain everything to you. Give me that chance to explain it. Please, Pepper.”

Pepper ignored him. She got all of their stuff and grabbed Peter’s hand, pulling him out of the bedroom and into the hallway, away from Tony.

Tony followed after her. He didn’t want them to leave. Not after everything. “Pepper. Pepper, please.” They were just about to walk into the elevator so he took a breath. “I love you, Pepper.”

She stopped walking but didn’t turn around.

“I fell in love with you from practically the day we first met. I want to spend my life with you and Peter because it just feels so right when we’re together.” He stepped towards her even though she wasn’t looking at him.

Pepper walked into the elevator and turned to look at Tony. “Don’t follow us.” She looked down at her feet and as soon as the elevator doors shut, she broke down and started crying.

Peter looked up at her. “Mommy? Mommy mommy? Why are we leaving?” He tugged on her hand because she wasn’t telling him anything. “I don’t want to leave. I like it here. And I like Tony. I don’t *wanna leave!*”

Pepper wiped at her tears and tried to pull herself together as the elevator doors opened up again and then she pulled Peter out, leading him outside and making their way back to the motel.

It was the only other place she could go. They didn’t have anywhere else and now after losing Tony, they didn’t have *anyone* else.

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Tony watched the elevator doors shut in front of him, taking them away.

He was furious.

He should have told Pepper the day he found out the truth. He didn’t blame her for feeling betrayed and like he lied to her.

It was all Ben’s fault and he wanted to kill Ben for what he did. But he wasn’t a killer...

Tony walked into his office and pulled out his phone, dialing Ben's number.

“Hello?”

“Listen here, you son of a mother fucking bitch.” Tony was beyond furious. “I know who you are and what you did. I know where your wife and son are and you will never see them again. But most importantly, I know where you are, you will turn yourself into the police for abuse or I will do it for you by the end of the day. Are we clear?”

Ben started screaming at him on the other end. Tony couldn’t make out what he was saying and didn’t care to listen to him. “Go to hell.” Tony growled. “Turn yourself in or I will do it for you. You’ve got till the end of the day.”

He hung up the phone and grabbed his jacket and shoes.

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Pepper couldn’t believe this.

She couldn’t stop crying but she didn’t want Peter to see her that way although it was way too late for that now.

They were worse off now.

She wished they never met Tony. Then she wouldn’t be feeling this way, she wouldn’t be feeling so betrayed and broken inside.

She looked at Peter who was lying on the bed, facing away from her but she couldn’t comfort him right now. She knew he really liked Tony.

Pepper put her head in her hands and cried silently into them but there was a knock on the door. She stood up to open it, expecting it to be the owner giving her extra towels but it wasn’t.

It was Tony.

“I told you not to follow us.”

Tony wasn't going to let her get away. “I know. And I'm sorry. But I'm not leaving until you let me explain. You can hate me all you want but I *need* to explain this to you.”

Pepper walked away from him but didn't shut the door so Tony walked in and shut it behind him.

Peter sat up on the bed and stared at him.

“Pepper, let me explain.”

Pepper sat down on the bed. “Fine. Explain it.” She looked at Peter. “Baby, how about you go run a bath and play with your lego man in the water but don't get in.”

Peter often did that on weekends since the water was too cold to actually sit in it so he only put his toys in there. He climbed out of the bed. “Okay.”

Tony didn't move from his spot. He waited until he heard the water running then he began. “When I met you, I didn't know your story or who Ben was. Not until after. He came to me asking me to find his wife and son because he knew you sold his car in New York so he found me to find you.”

Tony sat down on the opposite side of the bed. “I told him I needed more information but he refused to tell me anything. Then one day he gave me the names Pepper Parker and Peter Parker with a picture of you two and that's when I knew.”

Pepper nodded, trying to process all of this.

“He was secretive and didn't want to tell me much. I assumed there was domestic abuse going on and you took Peter and ran from him. I wanted you to admit it to me first so I could put him behind bars. I promise you I didn't tell him *anything* about you or Peter or anything.”

Tony wanted to reach out to touch her but he stopped himself. “I should have told you the day I found out but I was scared you’d pack up everything and leave again.”

Pepper turned to look at him. “Again? I took Peter and left with nothing but the clothes on our backs because my husband was beating me every night and he laid his hands on my son. You should have told me, better yet, you should have stayed out of it.”

Pepper felt like a fool. Here she was thinking she was keeping a massive secret about her past and Tony knew the whole time.

“So you knew about Ben the whole time?”

“Not the whole time. And I didn’t know he abused you, I just assumed. I wanted to be wrong.”

Pepper nodded. “When? When did you know?”

“The night we went out for dinner. I found out after that.”

Pepper nodded again and thought about it. “Did you know we were homeless this whole time?”

“No. Absolutely not. If I knew that, I would have done something sooner. I promise you I didn’t know about that.”

Pepper was still trying to process everything. She had to admit that she felt better knowing the whole truth but she still felt betrayed.

And there was something else on her mind.

“You said you love me. Do you?”

Tony’s heart fluttered. “I do. I fell in love with you the day we met. Something about you falling on ice had some kinda effects on me.”

Pepper smiled but looked away. She was trying to decide how she felt. She felt lied to and betrayed but she also knew Tony meant well, she also couldn't hide the fact that she was madly in love with the man.

She was scared to admit it though. "Nothing changed?"

Tony tilted his head. "What do you mean?"

"After you found out the truth about my past, Peter and I being homeless? Nothing changed for you?"

Tony moved closer. He didn't care if she moved away or pushed him off. "I love you and nothing will ever change that."

Pepper looked at him. "Will you tell me if it does?"

Tony shook his head. "No." Pepper looked down, her heart breaking a little. "Because nothing will ever change. I love you and I want you and Peter in my life. I am so sorry I didn't tell you about Ben. I should have but I didn't and I'm sorry. I can't go back and change that so please don't run."

Pepper felt so safe in that moment even though she was just yelling and screaming at Tony an hour ago. She couldn't picture her life without him and she's been trying to for a while but she couldn't.

Although she still felt hurt, she understood why he did what he did. As long as he never told Ben anything about him and she understood now that Tony wasn't using her or anything so she felt better about the situation.

Pepper placed her hand on Tony's cheek and pulled him in for a kiss. She wasn't ready to admit her feelings to him just yet though.

"Can I take you back to my place? I want you guys to move in with me. That's not changing either."

Pepper stood up. “Yeah. Let me get Peter.” She walked into the bathroom and sat on the closed toilet seat, pulling Peter to stand in front of her. “Hey, baby. I’m sorry I scared you. I was angry at Tony but we worked it out. We’re going to go back to his place again.”

Peter pulled out of her arms. “No. I don’t wanna go back if we have to leave again. I hate moving.”

That hurt to hear. It was really hard on Peter. Consistency was so important for children and Peter didn’t have that.

“We’re going to stay with him. I promise now. Let’s go.”

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The weekend went by smoothly and quickly.

Pepper was worried about Ben but Tony promised he was working on it. Tony maybe should have handled it differently because now he didn’t know where Ben was but he wasn’t too worried about it because Peter and Pepper were with him and they were safe.

Tony wanted them to feel at home with him since it was their home now too so over the weekend, he ordered paint, a new bed, dressers, a toy chest and of course toys for Peter to make his room his own.

They spent all of Saturday putting it together and once it was done, it looked cozy and so *Peter*. The walls were painted a baby blue, there was a bed up against the wall that was covered in more teddy bears than pillows. He had a bunch of new clothes in his new dresser and even more toys in his new toy chest.

Peter loved it.

Pepper was harder to buy for.

Tony expected as much.

He wanted to share a room with Pepper but he understood she wasn't ready for that yet so she had a room next to Peter's. He only bought her new bedding because that was all she would agree to.

And Peter only slept with Pepper no matter how amazing Tony made his bedroom. Tony expected as much as well.

So everything was going well. As well as he expected.

Then Monday morning came and Pepper wanted to walk Peter to school but Tony insisted that he could drive him and that way, he could sleep in an extra thirty minutes.

The idea was a lot to take in. She had been walking Peter to school for a *long* time but now she didn't have to. It would definitely make their day off to a better start.

So today started off good, until the afternoon came along and it was time to pick Peter up but someone beat her to it.

The bell rang and Peter ran out of his school doors. He was so used to meeting his mom out the back doors instead of now going to the front doors for the car pick ups.

He frowned when he didn't see his mom or Tony then he remembered where he was supposed to be so he turned to run back inside but he heard his name being called.

"Peter."

He turned in the direction.

"Peter. Over here."

Peter recognized that voice. His blood ran cold as he turned to the voice and saw his dad walking towards him.

He looked different. His hair was long and brushed back and his facial hair looked scraggy. Peter whimpered at the sight of him and all the memories he brought back.

“My boy. Aren’t you happy to see me?” Ben walked over to him and lifted him up, pressing a kiss to his cheek. Peter froze. “Or are you too busy calling Tony Stark daddy?”

Peter flinched. “No. I’m not. Where’s mommy?”

He wanted his mom.

“Hmm. I have the same question. Seems like she’s been too busy fucking Tony Stark.”

Peter frowned. “You said a bad word.”

Ben shifted Peter onto his hip and pressed another kiss against his cheek. “I love you so much and I missed you. Your mom had no right to steal you from me. I’m your daddy.”

Peter looked at him as he walked him across the busy school yard and towards the parking lot. “I wanna walk. Don’t carry me.”

“I can do whatever I want. You’re *my son!* Your mother stole you from *me!*” Ben aggressively opened a car door and went to shove Peter inside but Peter screamed and kicked him.

“No. Nooooo! Let me go! I wanna go home! I want mommy!” He tried to kick Ben away but he wasn’t strong enough so Ben got him into his car and slammed the door after him, getting into the front seat and driving away.

Peter sobbed.

He took off his backpack and sat up. “Daddy! I’m scared! You’re so mean all the time! *I hate*

you!”

Ben reached one hand into the back seats and grabbed Peter’s arm, dragging him into the passenger seat and pinning him against it. “Enough! You don’t talk to me that way! I’m you’re fucking father so *fucking respect me!*”

Peter cried harder. He wanted his mom.

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Tony was the first one to notice something wasn’t right.

Something felt very wrong.

Peter still wasn’t out of the school and he was always the first one out so he got out of the car, leaving Pepper inside to go track down an on duty teacher. “Hi. I’m waiting for my kid to come out,” Tony didn’t mean to say *my kid*. But it felt so right. “He hasn’t come out yet.”

“What’s his name?”

“Peter Pa Uh, Peter Moore.” Tony forgot that was the name Peter was still going by.

“Yes. He left with his father about five minutes ago.”

“His father? What do you mean? His father has no parental rights to him.” That was a lie. There was no legal action stopping Ben from seeing Peter as of right now but there will be soon and now Peter was with his abusive father.

The teacher looked confused but Tony didn’t wait to explain. “Did you see the car he got into?”

“Um... it was a dark blue Honda.”

He ran back to his car, started it and sped away.

“What’s going on?” Pepper was freaking out now. “Tony?! Where’s Peter? Where’s my son?!”

“I think Ben just took him. A teacher just said they went into a dark blue Honda.” Tony pulled out his phone and handed it to Pepper. “Call the police. Tell them to look out for a dark blue Honda.”

Pepper's hands were shaking. “Oh my god oh my god. My baby. What if he hurts him. Oh my god.” She dialed the number and looked up. A few cars away was a dark blue Honda. “Tony. There!”

Tony spotted it and cut two cars off then pulled up beside it at the red light. Pepper looked at the driver's seat and as soon as she made eye contact with Ben, all the blood felt like it drained from her body and like everything was moving in slow motion.

Peter was sitting on his knees in the passenger seat and trying to open the door to get out and she screamed for him. “Peter!”

Peter turned to look at her just as Ben stepped on the gas and went through the red light. Pepper watched him drive away, taking Peter away from her. “Go!” She screamed at Tony. “Go go go!”

Tony didn’t hesitate to step on the gas and chase after them.

He was a good driver but he’s never driven over 120 and cutting in and out of cars before so it was really testing his skills although he was not going to let Ben get away with Peter.

Pepper's heart was racing. They were so close yet so far away at the same time.

She wanted to hold Peter in her arms again but she didn’t trust Ben.

After what seemed like an impossibly long car chase but it was only around twenty minutes, a

police car was up ahead and stopped Ben's car.

Tony slowly pulled up behind him and opened his door. "You stay here. I'm gonna get him."

Pepper covered her hands over her mouth. She was terrified but there wasn't anything she wouldn't do for Peter. "I'm not staying in the car." She got out and raced over to the driver's seat.

Ben got out of the car and looked down at Pepper but Pepper didn't think twice before she threw a punch at his face. "Fuck you! You'll never be a good father. You'll never be a good husband and you'll never be a good person. The only thing you're good for is standing behind bars which is where you'll be going! I hate you, you sick, *twisted* monster!"

Tony watched Peter as he opened up the passenger side of the car door and lifted Peter into his arms. Peter wrapped his tiny arms around his neck and sobbed against him, pulling himself impossibly closer.

He was reaching for Pepper with his other hand that didn't have a death grip on Tony. "Wan' mommy! Wan' mommy!"

Tony walked over to her. She was breathing heavily and watching as the police officer handcuffed Ben. Tony turned Peter away so he didn't have to watch that. "Pepper."

Pepper violently flinched then relaxed when she saw Tony holding her son. "Thank you. Come here, Peter. You're okay. I'm here."

She pulled Peter into her arms and held him close and when she felt Tony wrap his strong arms around the two of them, she knew they would always be safe.

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Two months later.

Pepper was pulling the bedding off hers and Tony's bed so they could get ready for bed as Peter ran into the bedroom, swinging his pajamas around like a flag. She chuckled at his routinely nightly behaviour.

Tony walked up behind him and scooped him into his arms, pressing a ton of kisses onto his face and laying him on the bed. Peter giggled. "Daddy."

Tony took the pajamas from him and started wrestling him into them. "Silly boy. It's time for bedtime so you can get some rest and grow big and strong."

Peter giggled louder. "Like you, daddy?"

Tony lifted him onto his hip and poked his button nose. "Just like me."

"Okay, boys. It's time for bed." Pepper smiled at the two of them. Peter was fine with sleeping in his own bed now in his own room and Pepper slept with Tony. It took her a bit to actually gain enough courage to get into bed with him but once she did, she never went back to sleeping alone.

Peter clung onto Tony. "Mm. I wanna sleep between you guys again."

Tony looked at Pepper. She was okay with that and Tony loved his snuggle bug. "Alright. If that's what you want." He gently tossed him onto the bed. "You better get ready for cuddle time."

Peter giggled as Tony laid down and wrapped his big arms around him. They both smelt like strawberries since Tony helped Peter with his bath and got soaked in the process.

Once Pepper got into bed, Peter laid down between them then laughed and pressed a kiss to both of their cheeks. "I love you guys."

Tony pulled Peter against his chest and reached out for Pepper too. "I love you more than you'll ever know."

And that's when Pepper knew she found her happy ever after.

Maybe she had to rewrite the stars to get to where she was but it was all worth it.

Chapter End Notes

But not this one!

Haha did I scare you guys in the beginning notes

What do you guys think of the ending?

I'm sorry if it felt rushed. I didn't want to drag it on and on and for it to get boring so I rushed it a bit.

Let me know what you think:)

And thank you to everyone who's supported me on this fic! I love you all so much!!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!